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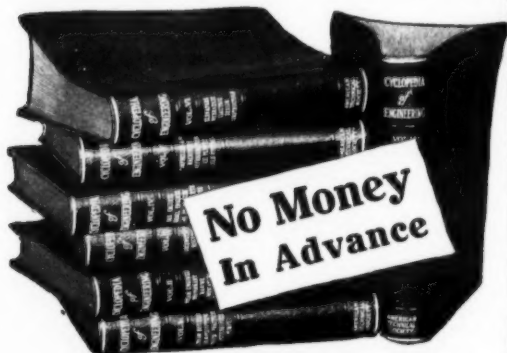
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The Magazine That Entertains

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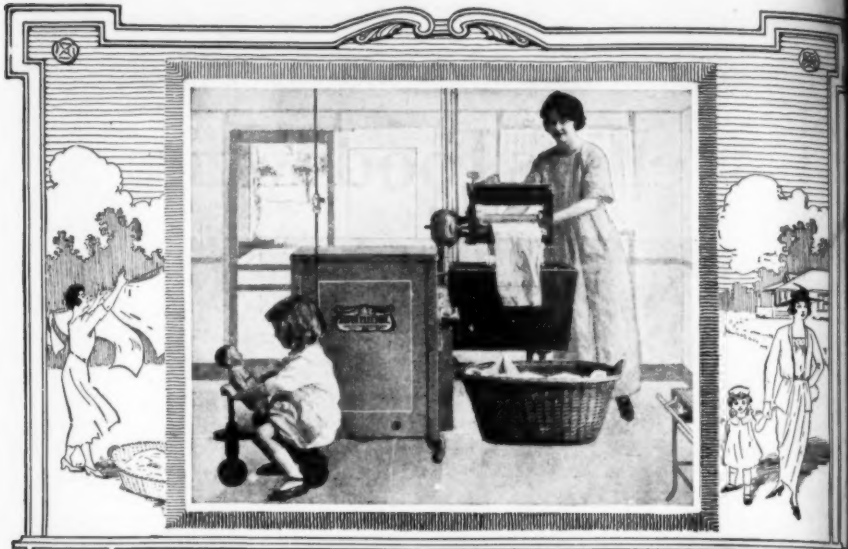
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AINSLEE'S

VOL. XLIV.

DECEMBER, 1919.

No. 5.

'The Half Gods Go

By Katharine Hill



Author of "Chameleons Up-to-Date,"
"The Price of the Beautiful Thing," etc.

CHAPTER I.

IS Ned Wantage in there?"

Crystal's correct and plain-featured maid held open the door of her drawing-room while the lady screamed her question from some private retreat. Jane, who had served in good houses, would have preferred to travel back and forth with messages, but her mistress' habit of shouting from end to end of the apartment was inveterate. It was easy for her to do this; she had always been able, in the very largest theaters, to make herself heard perfectly in the farthest rows.

Wantage started forward, a tall man with a distinguished and not unbeautiful head, his hair a little sparse on the shapely temples, his blank eyes suddenly lit at the sound of Crystal's voice.

"Well, Ned, listen—can you beat this? No, wait a minute—dash it all—is there anybody else in there?"

"Kendal was here, but he gave it up about twenty minutes ago—"

"Kendal? Oh, yes—my new airman. I remember now, I was making him wait on purpose. Women fuss so about these flyers—can't think why! He's inclined to be above himself, that young man. That was discipline."

"Did you think I needed discipline,

too? I've been waiting longer than Kendal."

"Well, I forgot you, Ned. I forgot everything—that's just it. Reason enough, too. Listen here—"

She interrupted suddenly into the fluffy, banal, luxurious room, a woman to whom all the same adjectives were applicable. She wore a pink negligée and bath slippers on her bare feet, and her thick, yellow hair fell over her shoulders and down a back that was a little fat just above the corset, while the lines of waist and hip remained perforce slender. Wantage believed her to be thirty-six and she was forty-six; the contours of her face and certain small signs in chin and neck told one story, with the precision and lack of emphasis that accompany truth; and twenty creams, rouges, astringents, and powders shrieked their denial. Plenty of people thought Crystal Carr might be about twenty-eight. Wantage had carried her yoke for more than a decade and, at thirty-five, twenty-five sounds a nice age to be; there was no deceiving him about it now, she often thought regretfully, he would always know accurately just how old she was—within ten years.

"Well, I've just had a letter"—she

sat down and turned to the last page of the sheet she held—"from Mrs. Septimus Bradish, the Rectory, Chipping Barton, Gloucester. What do you know about that? And what do you think the old dame is writing to me about?"

Wantage couldn't guess.

"It's that girl of mine! Ned, did I ever tell you I had a daughter?"

He had the rather touching worship of children, often found in middle-aged bachelors not likely to marry. A real child would have strained his devotion in an hour. But he encountered only freshly washed cherubs on brief, good behavior, with an eye to chocolates, and he had a vision now of a fairylike little creature with Crystal's flaxen hair and rosy cheeks.

"No, you never told me! Does this rector's wife look after her? Is the little thing sick?"

"She's not so little—that's the hell of it. She's—you know I was awfully young when I married Bill Jermyn. A mere flapper. Seventeen—sixteen, maybe—I forget. This wretch is nineteen years old!"

"Oh, it's a long story—you'll have to know it all if you're to be of any use to me. Bill was one of these haw-haw Oxford boys—good family, no money, sisters dressing like housemaids and doing stray typing so's to get a couple of sixpences to jingle—you know the kind of thing. Well, no, you don't, you're an American. On that side, the girls wouldn't see it to have brother cop all the coin in sight to get himself 'a gentleman's education.' The girls would get whatever there was without even a scrap for it, and Bill might have to go to work. Am I right?"

"Thank God, you are!"

"But this was Merry England. Anyway, Bill was a late arrival, at the tail of six daughters, and most of 'em must have abandoned hope by the time he was eligible for a public school. There was never any wail heard from them, so

far as I know, about Bill cornering the family resources. The wail came the year he left Oxford—when he married. It was a misalliance, you see."

"I should think that term described it fairly well. Had this young cub ever done anything but live off women and go to Oxford?"

"Poor Bill, he didn't have time. He got typhoid and died, before the kid came. I didn't know what to do with it. It was a great care and interruption to me. I was hopping about the provinces in those days, and not making enough to pay a proper nurse. So when Bill's two oldest sisters came to beg me to let them take care of Bianca, I was ready enough to forget the past and hand her over. I used to go down and see her once in a while. She was a little, skinny, dark thing, all eyes. Lately, I haven't been. Well, I don't know *when* I've been. There've been all those seasons in New York, and then I married Charley Smith, and he took it into his head to be jealous of my past, and after I divorced Charley I did think of going down once, and it turned out she was having scarlet fever.

"You're wondering what's the racket about now. Well, this Bradish thing writes me that the last aunt is dead. One or two of 'em died before and the rest got married and went out to those poisonous sort of places where you have to send the kids home. There isn't anybody on the Jermyn side any longer that wants to look after Bianca. It appears to be up to mother at last!"

"It will be delightful for you——"

"Ned, you aren't anything but a man, and you might just as well not talk. Here I have a nineteen-year-old daughter sprung on me out of Chipping Barton, probably a ringer for the sort of females her aunts were at her age—and here I am up to my ears in work, trying songs and getting clothes and subletting my flat and packing to sail day after to-morrow! Well, now, dear old

thing, you guess your part, don't you? Be a lamb and run down to this rectory place and pilot the girl on board the *Adriatic*. No sense in bringing her here, no sense in trying to fit her out in London and no time to do it in, anyway. Ten to one she'll be sick all the way across and never leave the stateroom. Are you on?"

Wantage had never yet refused to execute a commission for Crystal.

CHAPTER II.

Aunt Lucretia's was the third funeral that Bianca had to remember. There had been heavy flowers, a choking crepe veil and lugubrious faces with red-rimmed eyes, upon every side, a general inhibition upon all reasonable pleasure taking or indeed, occupation of any sort, however praiseworthy it would usually be considered. Two days after the hateful ceremony, Mrs. Bradish had come upon the girl desperately writing out a French verb for forgetfulness' sake, and had remarked, between tight lips:

"I am glad to see that you can take an interest in your studies, my dear!"

The effect had been to charge her with heartlessness.

But Aunt Lucretia had been the invalid one of the Jermyn ladies, inevitably outliving her active sisters. She had been an exacting presence in the house, unseen often by her niece for days, never much interested in anything but her own physical symptoms. Her passing meant for Bianca the ending of the staid, peaceful life in the stone house opposite the rectory, but it could not mean a very deep personal loss. Moreover, the girl was nineteen years old, and she was Crystal Carr's daughter. She wanted pleasure, and without herself recognizing the elements in her troubled misery, she was passionately rebellious against the gloomy atmosphere about her. She was ready to

throw off the yoke of mourning now, and go out into the sunlight again. But Mrs. Septimus Bradish would not let her.

She was expected to spend a quite disproportionate amount of her time in the church. After every one of the services there, which as a temporary member of the rector's household she found herself attending, Bianca would rise with natural alacrity to leave, and Mrs. Bradish would whisper, "I am sure you will want to stay on alone for a while, my dear!" and then herself tip-toe away with the rest of the parishioners. Left by oneself like that, in a place where there was nothing to do, there was no defense against tears.

It was horrible, and there were cheerful summer sounds outside, trees waving, clouds that took one sailing away from one's troubles. Bianca waited until every one was gone, until the hearty tones of Septimus Bradish, as he talked with his wife, could be heard receding toward the rectory. Then she stood up, slipped through the chancel where the effigy of a crusading ancestor lay with crossed knees and hands—she was fond of old Geoffroy de Jermyn, and patted him kindly in passing—and on out through the vestry door.

An angle of the church hid it happily from the rectory windows, and by keeping close to a line of cedars one could reach the sunken lane without being seen at all. The air was good, after the stale air inside, and there were chrysanthemums pushing through the grass. Bianca gathered three or four of them, and pulled them through her belt. It was a purely instinctive act, by which her rather somber little figure was greatly the gainer; the black gave value to the delicate incandescence of the chrysanthemums; from stodgy, quenching British black it became a French black, took a touch of coquetry, and seemed to say: "I am the opposite

of the flowers that adorn me, and the flower that I shroud, everything which I am not, they are."

In Mrs. Bradish's eyes—could she have seen—Bianca had committed a double crime, picking flowers from the church garden, wearing flowers in the first fortnight of her mourning!

She dropped into the lane, drew some deep breaths, tore her hat off and sent it spinning into the air. The ugly, crêpe-cumbered thing was actually some feet above her head when Ned Wantage, rounding the turn of the lane, first caught sight of her.

She failed to catch the hat, from surprise at the appearance of the stranger. In Chipping Barton any stranger was startling; this one might have been called, in excuse for Bianca's clumsiness, unnerving. Of the two or three "country seats" in the neighborhood, one was disliked by its owner and never occupied, another was the abode of a misanthrope who did not entertain, and a third—it had belonged to the Jermyn family until a gambling ancestor of the eighteenth century had lost it at White's—was serving nowadays as a home for crippled soldiers.

Chipping Barton was a town, of course, of some social pretensions, but of social pretensions very poorly sustained. The Jermyns were real gentry, every one knew that, and the position of a clergyman of the Church of England, as Mrs. Bradish used to say, is happily unassailable. The most prosperous shopkeeper in town was sending his son to a public school, and the son's grandson would thus be completely a gentleman, while the son himself was acquiring the shibboleth, and the doctor's wife boasted a tangled thread of connection which led up to a member of the baronetcy, no less. But none of these people, except indeed the young Harrovian, made any attempt whatever at smartness.

And the man who had walked with-

out warning into the field of Bianca's vision was, to put it briefly, a "nut." Bianca, so Victorian was her vocabulary, called him, to herself, a "swell." For a moment she stood petrified, very conscious of her ill-made dress and her cheap shoes. Then he was proffering her her hat, and she saw, at close range, that he was quite old, and that he had a "nice" face, and most friendly eyes.

"I wonder," he said, apparently on an impulse. "I beg your pardon—but I wonder whether you are not, perhaps, Miss Bianca Jermyn?"

"Why, yes—how did you know?"

"I guessed——" he murmured, checking an allusion to her mourning. "I was on my way to Mrs. Bradish's, to see you. Mrs. Carr—your mother asked me to come."

"My mother!" The girl's eyes grew wary at Crystal's name. Necessarily she had dreamed about her mother, necessarily, too, she had taken a tingle of the aunt's hostility to her. A mother who never took the trouble to come up to see one! Who sent precious, impractical presents erratically, forgetting birthdays, forgetting even Christmas, or forgetting her child at Christmas, forgetting her for years together and then sending a doll as she had done when Bianca was fifteen—an unforgettable, small insult to set beside that present of pearl earrings when she was nine. Almost all of the presents had been put away by Aunt Marcia, as unsuitable.

"Hasn't she written you?" Wantage asked, distressed. "You didn't expect me!"

"Perhaps she wrote to Mrs. Bradish," Bianca suggested. "But please—what is it? What does she want?"

"I ought to introduce myself, I believe. My name is Wantage—I'm an old friend of your mother's. She—the fact is—shall we walk on toward the rectory, while I explain? This is the right way, isn't it? They directed me

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from the station—there seemed to be no trap of any kind there——”

“Let’s walk the other way, instead!” Bianca said imperiously; she was too full of her own concerns now to be daunted any longer by Wantage’s clothes. “It isn’t far enough to the rectory. Why did my mother send you down here?”

It seemed grossly abrupt, the announcement he was charged to make to the girl, an impertinence even, coming from an utter stranger. But it was not the first time that he had been embarrassed in Crystal’s service.

“She’s sailing for America—to play a New York season there,” he blurted. “She wants you to meet her on the boat—the *Adriatic*—leaving Liverpool to-morrow. I am to travel with you, see you on board. It just happens—I’m sailing, too.”

Bianca had once been up to London to have a tooth attended to. She had suffered with toothache for three days and three sleepless nights before the preparations antecedent to so great an enterprise as a trip to London, forty miles away, had been complete. Crystal’s simple and obvious little plan fairly caught her breath with its daring.

“Go to America? Sail to-morrow!”

“Oh, you’ll enjoy the crossing—I always do. Best thing in the world for you, Miss Jermyn—change of scene, fresh interests——”

“Why, I think my mother must be crazy—I think you must be crazy! Leave my home—leave everybody and everything, on the spur of the moment like this! Why didn’t she come herself? I think she might at least have come herself!”

“She’s so busy—she has such quantities of things to do!” He remembered uneasily as he spoke, the time that Crystal was able to spare from the arduous duties of her artist’s life, for

motor rides and supper parties and young aviators and younger peers. “She is looking forward,” he invented civilly, “to the long voyage with you, without all the interruptions she is subject to in town. It was all rather sudden, you know—she’ll explain to you much better than I can.”

Bianca was trembling with excitement. He seemed so to take it for granted that she was going to sail to-morrow for America—and it seemed to her as mad a project, as to take airship for the moon would seem to most people—that she found herself suddenly imbued with the same belief. It wasn’t a crazy dream, it was a thing, after all, that could happen, was going to happen. Surprisingly, her blood began to tingle, to race. She’d never even seen the sea. Now she was going

To sail beyond the sunset, and the paths
Of all the western stars!

Mrs. Bradish receded; church, Aunt Lucretia’s dreadful, fresh grave, the shut-up stone house, Mr. Bradish’s professional consolations—all the distasteful things that had made the stuff of her life lately—receded. A wind of adventure blew upon her.

She had talked of “leaving everybody and everything.” But, after all, who was there whom she must leave? Old Geoffroy de Jermyn was quite the most congenial person from whom she would have to part in all Chipping Barton!”

“I’ll come,” she said solemnly.

“We’ll have to catch a train that leaves here at nine in the morning,” he told her. “You’ll have to pack to-day.”

“Oh! I only have two black dresses. I’ll need all sorts of things.”

“There are shops in New York, you know—one or two! A heavy coat for the steamer, and some motor veils you’ll need—your mother won’t expect you to dress. Hadn’t we better go back to Mrs. Bradish now, and tell her that you’re leaving?”

CHAPTER III.

Gray sky, gray rain, gray stone houses on either hand and muddy gray cobblestones under the wheels of the single station fly—yesterday preëmpted by the doctor's wife—from all this grayness Bianca Jermyn, a study in black and white, offered little relief. She had not slept the night before, in the excitement of the prospect before her, and her face was wan with fatigue; late imaginings and regrets, too, were assailing her. She sat silent beside Wantage, struggling, if he had known it, with tears.

He talked steadily, from a conventional instinct against silence with a comparative stranger, since he could not quite regard Bianca as a child and ignore her comfortably, although as Crystal's daughter and a girl half his age she did not, as women often unknowingly did, inspire in the imposing-looking man a kind of shyness.

"Charming little Old-World town, this—look at the pitch of those roofs! Cobblestones are so effective in pictures—Howard Pyle, Maxfield Parrish, and your man Rackham—but under my cab wheels I'd as soon have asphalt, wouldn't you?" Presently, in desperation, he was telling her about the asphalt lakes of Central America, where nature produces inexhaustibly the perfect flooring for city streets, of the methods of transporting it, even of comparative costs. Bianca was not responsive, but under cover of his babble they reached the station, and in a railway compartment, established opposite each other in corner seats, there was no longer any obligation to converse.

It was a surprise to the girl to find herself traveling first class; she had actually never been in a first-class carriage before, for her aunts, like many English persons, were willing to spend money in any conceivable way rather than to purchase comfort on a journey.

Wantage had had his surprise, too, at sight of her luggage—the tin trunk, the hamper, the corded boxes. It became his duty to descend at various points and ascertain that it was still traveling safely with them. In the intervals he studied his companion, surreptitiously, over the pages of the *Morning Telegraph*, and gave himself to surmises as to how she and Crystal would adapt themselves to each other.

Bianca didn't resemble her mother, he decided, in any single respect. The big eyes at which Crystal had cavilled were wide-set, dark and rather splendid in their young melancholy, the face narrowing sweetly to a square-cut, small chin. The nose was high and delicate, with fine-drawn nostrils, the mouth a geranium pink, of no decided lines as yet. Ears, eyebrows, wrists, and finger tips were all daintily satisfactory. Her dusky hair was pinned up with naïve clumsiness, and her atrocious clothes gained nothing from the way she had put them on; he longed to take her hat off and set it on again at a proper angle, he suffered for her in the needless disadvantage she was under in respect to her dress, while realizing that it was only a temporary one.

"Crystal will tear through the New York stores with her"—he reflected—"and presently show me a daughter whom I shan't recognize."

Bianca meanwhile looked out at England rushing past her, and found in the novelty of mere swift motion, an assuagement of her inner dismay. She had begun, too, to feel an immense confidence in this considerate Mr. Wantage. She had always envied girls with fathers, although the British paterfamilias has not quite the amenable character of his American counterpart and she had heard stories of thwarted ambitions and domestic tyrannies; it had seemed to her she would compound for such things—aunts, too, could be tyrannical, she knew—for the sake of having

a big, kind person always about, whose business it would be to look after her.

Traveling with Wantage was like traveling with an ideal father out of a storybook. He ordered in the most expensive tea-basket, bought her a pile of magazines and produced a box of sweets from Fuller's that he had had the foresight to bring with him from London—a box so large that Bianca stared at it helplessly, it seemed designed for the refreshment of an orphanage, rather than of one half orphan. Its contents were a revelation to a palate educated only to MacIntosh's toffy and Cadbury's chocolate. The box, after the first experiment or two, didn't seem at all too large.

Wantage, for all the deference of his manner to her, and the fine austerity of his features, had about him that unassertive something that commands service. She found it good to be by his side in the transit from train to boat, to find herself relieved of every slightest encumbrance, to find doors opening before her and to follow his high head and broad shoulders through the crowd at the dock. She felt a personage, suddenly, by virtue of the consideration now offered her. It occurred to her that her mother must be more important than she had ever been allowed to guess. An actress! The aunts had uttered the word with acid disapproval. There was Nell Gwyn and Mrs. Siddons and Mary Anderson. She remembered a story of how men had taken the horses out of Mary Anderson's carriage and drawn her home from the theater themselves. Bianca's heart began to beat at the prospect of meeting a mother who, perhaps equally, held sway over men.

"Of course she wouldn't be on deck," said Wantage.

He had been darting glances right and left in the crowd. They had gone on board now and stood by the rail, momentarily irresolute.

"I'll take you down to your stateroom. Most likely she is there, or she hasn't come yet."

The stateroom was a luxurious affair of twin beds and a full-sized window, instead of a porthole. But it was empty, and save for Bianca's incongruous luggage, meticulously tidy.

The girl sat down on one of the beds, and took her hat off, fatigue clouding her brain like an opiate, now that the tension of expectancy was relieved. "I think I'll wait for mother here," she said, "I'm so sleepy—all of a sudden—"

Wantage left her, and in five minutes she was asleep. He went on deck, feeling no presentiment as yet, although the hour set for the *Adriatic's* sailing was very near. Crystal was always as late as possible for everything, as a matter of course. But the stage, lax in many respects, exacts promptitude with inexorable firmness, and the obligation of arriving at a theater fifteen minutes before the curtain had taught her to catch trains and boats unerringly.

Remembering the slowness with which the watched pot boils, Wantage went below presently, to learn the places of the party at table, and then sought the deck steward to negotiate for chairs in the most desirable locations. Then he recalled some letters he must send back by the pilot—Crystal's commandeering of his last two days in England had caused the neglect of his personal business—and he went below again to write them. The *Adriatic* boomed deeply while he was about this last task, and before he had finished he felt the floor quiver under his feet. Excited voices, hurrying groups of people, he disregarded. Doubtless Crystal was on board by now. But her meeting with her daughter was a sacred occasion on which there was no need for his intruding himself. He had provided for their comfort, and at dinner he would seat himself beside them.

A monotonous chanting of "Mr. Wantage—" at last caught his attention and he looked up to signal his presence.

It was a wireless that the steward brought him. Crystal had signed it. "Plans changed. Sail week after next. Look after the kid."

CHAPTER IV.

Bianca slept heavily, soothed by the faint motion of the first hours out. She woke to instant and pleased recognition of her surroundings but to wonder that her mother was still absent. Perhaps she had looked in, seen that Bianca was asleep and withdrawn in order not to disturb her? No one who knew Crystal could have framed such a surmise.

She washed, marveling at the instant hot water and the surely excessive provision of towels; she tidied her hair, put on the heavy coat Wantage had enjoined and half timidly emerged from the stateroom.

He was there, stationed where he could command a view of her door, and his face was worried, compunctious.

"I'm afraid this will be a great disappointment to you!" he began, and showed her the wireless message.

"Oh!"

Bianca read with head lowered; she didn't quite know how to take this new development. Among her other feelings about the meeting with her mother there was a great shyness, and to this the postponement was welcome. The delay was only for a fortnight. And Mr. Wantage would look after her.

He was relieved to find her not, after all, overwhelmed with disappointment. "You'll have to make the best of my company, I'm afraid," he said, smiling ruefully.

Through the open doorway beyond him blew a keen salt air, and gray waves ran slanting from under the ship's keel.

The rhythmic plunge of the boards under her exhilarated Bianca, and she smiled back at him—a flashing, delightful smile, to call forth which—Wantage found himself thinking—a man might put himself out considerably.

They went out on the deck, and the wind swept down upon Bianca's hat and, daring what he hadn't dared, tore it from her head and cast it, a black blob, upon the water far astern. She gasped in consternation, and caught at her tumbling hair. It was pretty hair, fine spun, cloudy, dark with a mesh of gold woven through it.

"What shall I do? I haven't another hat!"

"Not a cap—a tam of any kind, nothing?"

She shook her head, catching her under lip between her teeth; the loss seemed a catastrophe to her.

"Well—you don't need one on the boat, anyhow. Take one of my caps and wrap a veil all around and over it, tie it firmly—that'll prevent your catching cold. Perhaps some woman on board will lend you a hat to go ashore in—you're sure to make some acquaintances, you know. Or there may be some hat buyer, with sample hats, who'll sell us one."

The knotted veil, pinning the soft hair down around her face, as it did, was a great improvement over the hat that Mrs. Septimus Bradish had selected for her charge. As, under the tonic wind, she began to glow in color, their fellow passengers began to look at Bianca. Wantage found it pleasant to pace the deck beside her, to watch her naïve interest in every detail of the boat's working, her envy of the lookout in the crow's-nest, her excitement when a porpoise leaped at their bows.

In spite of the game way the girl was taking her disappointment, he felt distinctly provoked with Crystal. This cavalier way of treating a daughter, and a daughter of débutante age, who should

have been sheltered and fussed about and fussed over, struck him as both unseemly and unkind. Of course the child was quite safe in his charge. But mere safety was not enough, in Wantage's view; she should have been hedged about with unnecessary, enhancing ceremonies, protected from non-existent dangers, sent to bed at half-past nine. Crystal had pitchforked her onto an Atlantic liner without so much as a package of Mothersill's Remedy for Seasickness to companion her on her first ocean voyage!

She proved to be an excellent sailor, happily, perhaps by heritage from some seafaring ancestors, or from Crystal herself, who had lost count of her crossings. That abject discomfort in solitary confinement, when he might neither visit nor cheer her, which Wantage feared for her, she escaped. Even when the *Adriatic* ran into higher seas and the dining room was sparsely peopled, Bianca presented herself promptly at every meal, and between meals walked the deck or chatted placidly in her steamer chair. She chatted now with others besides Wantage. It seemed to him that he could not leave his own chair for five minutes without returning to find one of the many unattached American youths that the boat carried, seated casually upon the foot-rest and talking to Bianca.

Seeing the child bright and amused, he made it a matter of principle on these occasions not to claim his place too soon. These boys of her own age could entertain her better than he could. Should any individual of an undesirable type approach her, it would lie within the scope of his duties to warn him off. Such perfunctory protection and a general oversight of her comfort, he considered, was all that Crystal's careless injunction demanded of him.

It is easier for a woman traveling with a man to meet other men than other women, since her escort will make

smoking-room acquaintances, and beyond four or five persons within speaking distance at table, there is no one with whom she is naturally thrown. Once Bianca made an experiment in friendliness on her own account, offered the choice of her "seven pennies" to a yellow-haired girl in a red *béret*, who had loudly complained that she had nothing to read, and talked to her with eager pleasure until the girl said,

"Your uncle's looking for you, I think."

Bianca glanced up, startled, to see Wantage approaching, with his quick glances that indeed seemed to search for some face.

"But he's not my uncle!" she exclaimed.

"Oh! Well, what is he—stepfather? You see, your names not being the same——"

"He isn't a relative at all. He's just—we're crossing together——"

"Oh!"

The yellow-haired one looked puzzled, and probably consulted with her severe-looking mother upon the subject, for when next day Bianca smilingly overtook her as she did her dutiful rounds of the deck, her face became almost the color of her *béret*, and she remembered she had to go below for something immediately.

Bianca had not to be thus shaken off more than once. She was hurt, of course, but quite uncomprehending, and her conclusion was that she was avoided because she was so badly dressed. She had now another count in her indictment against Crystal, that her mother had let her make the voyage without seeing to it that she was properly equipped.

Her mourning, of course, exempted her from any necessity to dress otherwise than very simply, but her ill-cut skirts, her clumsy shoes, her cotton stockings, the absence in every article of apparel she owned of any touch of

either smartness or grace, had become to her, surrounded as she now was by well-dressed women, a source of torment.

Wantage consoled her, when she showed a little of this feeling to him, with eulogies of New York's resources.

"Your mother would make every last woman on board here look a four-flusher," he assured her. "She'd rather shop than eat any day, and dressing you will be as much fun for her as dressing a doll."

But Bianca was too much her mother's daughter, perhaps, to be anxious to submit herself wholly, in the matter of clothes, to another's inspiration. In Chipping Barton she had been offered no choice, the village dress-maker had made her frocks under Aunt Marcia's direction, and had made her mourning no less incapably under Mrs. Bradish's. Lying in her steamer chair now with eyes closed in ostensible slumber, the girl dreamed, oftener than not, of the wardrobe she would assemble in New York before her mother reached America.

Each maiden Jermyn lady, in making her will, had left her small pittance unhesitatingly to her brother's child, although there were sundry nephews and nieces now bearing less worthy names, likely to be equally in need of money. Bianca had thus in all some eight hundred pounds a year, for the ladies had grown richer with the war, as fruit of the patriotic impulse that caused them to take the money out of conservative investments paying three per cent, and to buy war bonds at four and a half. She had been supplied with a quarter's allowance in advance on leaving England, and two hundred pounds—a thousand dollars, nearly, for she was trying to calculate in American money—seems inexhaustible in relation to clothes' purchases, to a girl who has never paid more than thirty shillings for a dress in all her life!

CHAPTER V. ROBES AND CHAPEAUX.

Mme. Simone

will exhibit daily, from ten to twelve, and from two to four, the Parisian models she is importing for the coming season, together with English sports models, lingerie, and footwear.

A few models offered for sale.

A flush of pleased excitement rose to Bianca's forehead as she read the card. She could buy clothes, actually, on the boat itself—that hat which was a necessity, but not *only* the hat, she promised herself. There would be a particularly poignant satisfaction in promenading, in the sort of things Madame Simone doubtless offered, before the very people, the girl in the red *béret* especially, who had looked in scornful ridicule upon the garments she was wearing now.

Feeling too shy to dare alone the small cabin where the seductive wares of the modiste were displayed, she made Wantage accompany her. Half the women passengers of the *Adriatic* seemed to be there, admiring, criticising, occasionally buying; and the attendants of Madame Simone paid little attention to shabby Bianca, who had thus opportunity to prowl around and admire to her heart's content. But to Wantage they addressed themselves immediately, with eager deference.

"How funny!" Bianca thought. "They can't suppose *he* wants to buy any of these things!"

When it appeared that she and Wantage were together, the solicitude to please was extended to her, and she had presently bargained for a costume of black wool jersey, a smart small hat, silk stockings, and a pair of long pointed oxfords.

It was all that she actually needed for a creditable appearance on the boat and when leaving it, and Wantage took her aside to warn her that Simone's prices were probably inflated by the

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circumstances under which she was selling.

"You could get the same things in her own shop next week, for two-thirds, at most, of what she's asking."

But Bianca had tasted blood. They had showed her an afternoon frock of black chiffon in which the *fausse maigreur* of her young figure, she divined, would be enchanting, and she, whose underclothing had been always of stoutest, maidenly English long cloth, was looking now at a display of lingerie designed later to interest Fifth Avenue. She stopped buying, at last, only from dismay at realizing that she had spent eighty pounds, but the dismay, while operative to prevent further extravagance, was quite submerged in exultation at the prizes she carried off. She appeared at dinner in the chiffon frock, triumphant, radiant, and amazingly lovely.

There had been varying opinions on the *Adriatic*, until now, as to the relations between the American who looked as though he might be somebody, and the pretty young girl who was with him. Most people had set them down at first for father and daughter, or uncle and niece, until the mother of the girl in the red *béret* had spread the information that, by Bianca's admission, there was no relationship between them. The clean-minded continued to suppose the actual truth, that Wantage had been asked to look out for the daughter of friends, while the majority of the passengers surmised that there was trouble ahead for the pair at Ellis Island.

When it appeared, however, that he had been buying clothes for her, at Madame Simone's outrageous prices, it was no longer possible to draw any conclusion but the latter.

The fault was indeed all Crystal's, but afterward Wantage blamed himself bitterly for his own stupidity, though in fact it had no more occurred to him that such inferences could be drawn

about the girl, than if she had been six years younger. He had not, of course, paid for her purchases and while he had himself criticized the clothes she had been wearing before, he had not realized the extent to which they proclaimed poverty to a woman's eye, had supposed them the result of poor taste and limited opportunity only.

Nor was he a man whose conduct of his life a mere acquaintance would feel encouraged to comment upon. It remained for a South American in the smoking room, half-seas over at the time, to reveal to Wantage the misconception under which by now the whole ship was laboring.

What Don Rodrigo said does not bear repeating. Wantage resisted the impulse to stamp on the little beast, and said with creditable quietness:

"You're drunk, and can't prevent filth coming out, I suppose, if you open your mouth. But don't mention that young lady's name again—any lady's name—unless you are eager for a beating."

Don Rodrigo subsided, but Wantage, looking around him, perceived with chilling blood that the other men present, while sympathetic to him as against the Peruvian, whose remark had been outrageous, did not show the disgusted fury which such words about such a girl as Bianca, should have aroused. There was a covert half smile on one face, a look of understanding—though there was nothing to be understood—on another.

And he was, of course, quite helpless. There was nothing that he could say that would not make matters worse.

Nothing that he could say to the men in the smoking room. But to Bianca he could say less than he had been saying, and say it coldly; he could respond to the overtures of a certain lady in a purple cape, who had invited him daily; and hitherto in vain, to join her bridge table. To her he could make casual reference

to his long friendship with Bianca's mother, and he could hope that none of these people would ever cross his path or the girl's again.

CHAPTER VI.

The *Adriatic* had so far been running through the heavy swinging seas usually enough encountered in the North Atlantic in September. On the afternoon of the day following Bianca's unlucky purchase of clothes, however, a north-east storm of formidable fury swooped upon her. Out of a dark, low sky the wind blew with merciless, unwavering force; Bianca, trying to walk in the teeth of it, was blown back against the rail and ignominiously driven, if she would stay on deck, to shelter on the lee side. Later there was no question of staying on deck, spray swept it, and the enormous waves that charged down on the *Adriatic* and then raced glimmering for the other horizon, induced a motion compared to which past rollings were mere undulations, a motion which made it necessary for the seamen themselves to clutch at supports in walking.

Bianca regained her stateroom after a difficult dinner, to find that her window, which, being on the port side, she had left partly open, had been closed for her in her absence, and closed in such a way that she could not move it. It was no use ringing to have it opened, for the thing had clearly been done purposefully, and doubtless for an excellent reason; she pushed at it petulantly for awhile, and then abandoned the effort and flung herself on the bed, giving herself to it as it mounted and dropped beneath her, in the instinctive way that saved her from sickness.

She was hurt and troubled by Wantage's behavior to her all day; just when she had been glad to think that he need no longer be ashamed of her, when she was at last suitably outfitted to appear at his side, he suddenly mani-

fested a feeling he had never shown before, he seemed to avoid her deliberately, to try to emphasize the detachment between them, to set her and keep her at a distance. She puzzled unhappily over this development of a day, without finding an explanation for it.

But his unfriendliness made it not worth while to fight her way to the cabin again, and Bianca prepared the more willingly for a long evening in her stateroom, since it offered an opportunity to wear her most charming acquisition, a champagne-colored negligee of diaphanous texture and seductive draping. She forgot Wantage's coldness in the pleasure of slipping this on and loosening her cloudy hair and admiring herself in the long mirror. Then she piled the pillows from both the beds onto one, making a refuge in which she might securely wedge herself, and took up the novel she was reading.

Hours passed; and the clamor of the storm increased. It had not occurred to Bianca to be frightened, although the turmoil and the pitching induced a tension of nerves that warred with the thought of sleep. There was even a sort of piquancy about the luxury of the small room, its clear steady lights, its warmth and its occupant in shimmering, delicate-colored fabrics.

But the warmth became too great at last, and Bianca sprang up to struggle again with the window. It was at this moment that a cross sea swung in as the *Adriatic* dipped her port side low in the water, and with a thunderous shock swept over the promenade deck and fell against the thick glass on which Bianca's slender fingers rested.

She had no thought but that the ship was homing for the bottom, that the gloom into which for a terrified second she peered was that of a rising ocean which must by now have topped the main-mast. What did she know, after all, of sea dangers, and what had she been about to read tranquilly while dev-

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ils of titanic power raved outside? Her former fearlessness amazed her, she might have known that no ship could weather a storm like this; probably every one else on board knew it.

She tore open her door and fled down the corridor to Wantage's stateroom, near at hand; she was looking, not for help, but for companionship in the face of death. She knocked, and his voice said with astounding abstracted calmness, "Come in!"

Wantage was well enough off, but he did not fling money away on unnecessary personal luxuries, as Crystal did. His quarters contained everyday berths and no extraordinary appointments, and he was reading in the lower one of the berths when Bianca opened his door.

"What on earth do you want?"

His face changed startlingly as he saw her; her first glimpse had been reassuring, in spite of what she thought she knew, but the consternation that immediately sprang there confirmed all her fears again.

"We're sinking. The water's over my window—I couldn't be alone—"

She sank to the floor beside him, clutched for his hand and, with it, found some comfort.

He stared at her frowning, then snatched his hand away and uttered angrily, "For God's sake shut that door!"

She obeyed blindly, bewildered by his manner, and fell back against it as the boat dropped again into some black abyss, foam streaked. He spoke the more bitterly for the realization of the girl's alluring appearance as she leaned there, her big eyes quite black in a face struck to pallor, her hair a tumbled dusk around her, her feet—bare!—and the pretty figure swathed in that coquetry of soft yellow against the white paneling of the door. A man who was not in love with her mother might well

have been robbed of his night's rest by such an intrusion. His own resentment, he was quite sure, was solely on her own account.

"We are *not* sinking—you little idiot! Can't you feel the motion, exactly as it's been all evening? Those aunts of yours seem to have brought you up very badly! Don't you know you had no business to come in here, to let your silliness get the better of you to such an extent as this?"

"Not sinking——"

The rest of his speech blew past her for the moment. Afterward she was to recall it with ears on fire and with growing resentment, but now she heard only his denial of the danger.

Quivering, she stood, certifying in her unsteady frame the banging motions of the ship, her nerves quieting and panic ebbing as she realized that indeed and after all her fear had been causeless.

"Really? Really it's all right, you think? You're *sure* we aren't going to be drowned?"

"We're going to be knocked about like this, and very unpleasant it is, until we run out of this storm. There's no *danger* at all—a liner the size of this one can ride out any North Atlantic storm that ever blew. What I am trying to impress on you is that you did very wrong to come in here."

"I'll go now," she said meekly, ashamed for the fear she had shown.

"No! Wait a minute—pitch me that dressing gown!"

She gave him the garment, and he pushed the light out for a moment, pushed it on again, and in dressing gown and slippers left the stateroom and reconnoitered outside for a brief space. Then he returned, and held open the door for Bianca, with a silent gesture of dismissal.

She brushed past him with chin high, no longer frightened, but angry in her

turn now, uncomprehending, knowing only that she had come to him for comfort in a time of terror, that he had spoken to her as no one had ever spoken to her, and turned her away from his door like an intrusive and troublesome child.

CHAPTER VII.

Pansy Sloan, to whom Bianca was consigned in New York, had an apartment on the Drive, a large and carefree circle of friends and a slavish devotion to Crystal Carr. She was on the stage herself, intermittently, and had once played in the company of the English musical-comedy star. In her home Bianca found photographs of her mother on every hand, showing the woman's commonplace beauty at every angle and in every costume. She had time to become very familiar with her mother's appearance, in the month that actually elapsed before Crystal came to America.

Pansy's enthusiasm at once included Bianca in its warmth.

"You're not a bit like her," she said, receiving the girl into a taxi at the dock, when Wantage had bowed and turned back into the customs shed.

"You've got a lot more to work with than she has, for one thing. Now Crystal—you know I think she's the most wonderful thing in the world, so you won't mind my saying this—but it's personality with her, every bit as much as it is looks. She's about the only Englishwoman I ever knew, for instance, who has simply no nose at all. Now yours is a little dream, and your eyes are really good—why don't you go into pictures? You'd make a hit, and oodles of money!"

"Pictures— Oh, the cinema!" Bianca laughed helplessly. "*Does* one—in America? I'm not on the stage, you know, Mrs. Sloan." From fear of being laughed at, she suppressed the

absurd fact that she had actually, with the exception of some Benson performances of Shakespeare, never been to the theater in her life. Her aunts had been wont to speak mysteriously of something "in her blood," as a reason against allowing her to see plays, as they might have kept a drunkard's child from tasting an alcoholic drink.

"No reason why you shouldn't go on, is there? You're very talented I'm sure—couldn't help being. You have a nice little smile, too—the kind of smile that could get famous—"

"Oh, please, Mrs. Sloan!" The idea of her smile becoming famous was quite unnerving to Bianca.

Pansy was in full enjoyment of a commission from Crystal, no less a one than that of engaging and preliminarily furnishing an apartment for her occupancy. Meantime Bianca was to visit her mother's friend. And a mad life Bianca found it, being Mrs. Sloan's guest!

Breakfast came to one's room, at whatever hour one liked to order it, and afterward quietude reigned until noon at least. Then Pansy appeared, the telephone extension began to ring, and people of all kinds and both sexes, to drop in. One ate, shopped, motored, danced, ate again and again and again, talked endlessly, went to the theater, went on to the Follies, went somewhere, it seemed to Bianca; aimlessly and eternally, until when she was left at last to go to bed, she was far too tired and excited to sleep. The only serious moments of the day were those given to Turkish baths, hair treatments, and facial massage. It mattered nothing that the girl had no need of any of these beautifiers or preservatives. She had to have them because Pansy was having them, and Pansy would have been hurt and desolated if left to have them alone.

A girl brought up in a small English town can usually count on the fingers of

one hand the men she knows, other than immediate relatives and those of the serving classes; sometimes her thumbs will suffice her for the enumeration of unmarried males. The eldest Bradish boy had admired Bianca dumbly, and no other young man had admired her in Chipping Barton, because there had been no other young man there. Pansy's radius swarmed with Bobs and Billys and Teddys and Dicks, and they were all Bianca's cavaliers at once, partly no doubt because the girl was really lovely, but largely in consequence of the atmosphere in which they met her, Pansy's atmosphere of free-and-easy pleasure seeking, of jolly flirtation, the cardinal premise of which seemed to be that every one who traveled in her crowd was a good sport, and that every Jack must have his Jill, while Jill might have as many Jacks as she could attract.

Wantage joined them once or twice, and seemed to be endeavoring, Bianca thought, by tardy attentions to her to atone for his strange behavior on the boat. She did not soften to him, for all his offerings of roses and top-heavy pink chrysanthemums, and his invitations to dinner. The very flattery she received from the unimportant men of Pansy's circle, though she was perceptive enough to see that Wantage stood head and shoulders above them, had bolstered her vanity and made it correspondingly more sensitive, so that the memory of his reception of her on the night of the storm became the more intolerable. "Little idiot—your silly cowardice—badly brought up—you had no business to come in here—"

Even if he was old enough to be her father, he had no right to address her in terms like these!

She thanked him in four cold words for the flowers, didn't care about dinner at Shanley's, paid Wantage back, as nearly as possible in his own coin, for the three days on the *Adriatic* in which he had practically sent her to Coventry.

CHAPTER VIII.

Crystal had commissioned Wantage to bring Bianca to join her on the *Adriatic*, in entire good faith. She had really meant, at the time, to sail on the day set, but she liked the atmosphere of upheaval and packing no better than other people, and had never formed the habit of putting up with what she did not like. On an impulse to escape from the ruins of home and from Denise's sour face, whose expression, whenever she happened to want something that the maid had packed, was really irritatingly cross, she had allowed Ferdie Kendal to drive her out to Herndon, where aerial stunts of different sorts were being performed.

She had met a lot of nice fellows out there, old associates of Ferdie's in war flying, and they had all been keenly interested in meeting Crystal Carr, and most attentive. Several of them went on to the Savoy for dinner with her and Ferdie, and in the course of the evening she found herself making a number of pleasant engagements which couldn't be kept if she went to America next day.

And so, quite simply, she didn't go. The fortnight before rehearsals for the New York opening began, which she had planned to spend in New York establishing herself for the winter, she transferred to the English side, and devoted to farewell gayeties. Pansy Sloan would attend to things in New York. There was Bianca. Wantage was looking after Bianca.

Her daughter was the least of Crystal's worries, yet she began to think of her with some curiosity on the morning when the Statue of Liberty loomed ahead of the boat by which she had at last sailed. Weird to have a girl on one's hands, to be responsible for her and all that, and not even know whether she was cross-eyed or not. It would suit her best, she decided with the frankness one may use in one's own

mind, if the girl turned out plain and coltish, a lover of church services and household activities, like her aunts. But Bill had had awfully good features, she remembered sentimentally, fine eyes and a lot of thick, soft hair that she had loved to play with, and it seemed most improbable that she and Bill could have produced an unattractive daughter. Crystal resigned herself to a pretty one, but she clung to her notion of coltishness, immaturity, shrinking shyness, a misguided method of doing the hair, and a complete absence of any approximation to a silhouette.

She thought this, as she leaned on the deck rail and gazed idly at the people on the dock. There was a girl in the foreground of these, on whom her eye rested, as embodying all the qualities that Bianca could not be expected to have, a beautifully dressed girl, not too tall, like the gigantic young Americans and English of the present generation. Her face, what with distance and a veil, was indistinct, but the outlines of her costume were correct, and the flare and angle of her hat had a beautiful rightness. It was with a shocked surmise that Crystal, a second later, recognized old Pansy at the girl's side.

Her fears were confirmed after the interval for landing, and Bianca, rather *gênée* but not awkward, offered herself for a maternal kiss. Crystal gave it with concealed fury, and had then to listen to Pansy's praise of her daughter.

"I certainly do envy you this girl of yours, Crystal—she's a darling, and some heartbreaker! Everybody's raving about her. She tells me you haven't seen her for years—well, isn't she a pretty surprise? She's got that English complexion and features, and real ideas about clothes; it's a combination you don't often meet, and when you do—good-night!"

"Oh, she's charming—perfectly charming!" said Crystal in bored tones.

Afterward, alone with Pansy, she rebuked her friend for indiscretion. "You'll be making the girl vain, talking about her looks like that before her face!"

"In my opinion it does a girl no harm to have confidence in her looks," Mrs. Sloan argued.

"She's nothing wonderful, that I can see, and she'll get above herself, if you go talking before her that way. What's she got, anyway? That sort of little, thin figure may be the style, but men don't like it—they like something they can take hold of. What does Ned Wantage say about her? Why didn't he meet me, by the way?"

"Can't imagine! Why, I haven't talked to him about her, much. I'll say he admires her. She acts kind of funny about him. But she has lots of my boys going, let me tell you. Seriously. There was one fellow wanted to marry her—already! Dead serious. Oh my, yes!"

"Well, she'd better take him," said Crystal hastily. "A girl's always better married."

"Well, I'm a believer in matrimony myself"—Pansy also was now administering joy to a third husband—"but you see, this Charley Kaufman is bald-headed. Now, you can't expect a girl like Bianca—"

You couldn't, of course.

"When's she going on the stage, Crystal? She's got a pretty, little voice, but did you know she can't dance a step? You ought to start in right soon having her trained. You know, I was thinking, why couldn't she play *Aileen* in your show? It's a nice little part, but any simp could play it, and no dancing to speak of, and a chance to look real sweet!"

Crystal arose and became tragic. "My child is *not* going on the stage, Pansy Sloan! Don't you and I know the temptations and the dangers and the rotten railway journeys and hotels that

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go with the life well enough to keep our daughters out of it?"

"Why, I let my girls go on, and they've done very well. Young things like that can stand the traveling better than we can at our age. Why, Ellie actually likes it, says she never sleeps anywhere as she does in a Pullman berth. As for the dangers part, keep that for when you do a column for a paper. If your own daughter, playing in your own company, wouldn't be safe, I'd like to know who would be!"

"Well, she isn't going to play in my company. For one thing, there's Miss Martin's contract. And for another, I don't want her there!"

To Bianca also Crystal spoke sharply on the subject of her supposed theatrical ambitions.

"I hope you've got no notions in your head about going on the stage. It's a dog's life, and as far as I can see you have none of the qualifications for it. You mumble your words, you've got no personality, can't dance or sing or anything!"

Bianca, who two weeks before had never seen a play, had now seen nearly a dozen and had formed opinions of her own. "I couldn't do musical comedy, of course. But I *do* think I could play *Juliet*."

Crystal threw back her head and laughed wildly. When she sobered she repeated to Bianca that paraphrase of a newspaper article sometimes signed by her with profit, which she had tried with less success on Pansy.

"I want my daughter to remain a simple little English flower," she ended. Bianca, unknown to herself, had been remaining an unspoiled blossom in the newspapers now for many years.

To the flower herself the prospect held out was not particularly attractive, but she acquiesced dutifully, and the more willingly because it seemed that remaining unspoiled didn't conflict at all with wearing pretty clothes and run-

ning around as she had been doing, with Pansy and Pansy's friends.

For Crystal, in desperation, had resolved that this disastrously attractive daughter must be maneuvered into marriage as quickly as possible. She regretted, now, the heedlessness which had brought her to the land of freedom two weeks ahead of her mother. Had she, Crystal, received the child from the hands of Mrs. Bradish, she might easily have snubbed her into a subordination from which she could never have emerged. Her mother would have selected her clothing, of the type suited to English flowers and conducive to their remaining unspoiled, unnoticed, and unplucked.

Now with money in her pocket, she had had the range of New York stores, and no influence more repressive than Pansy's at her side. She had visited the gayest places and received the homage of youths and men, and it was quite impossible, Crystal realized, to thrust her back after this into a suitable obscurity. The only thing to do was to marry her, and to pack her off to a distance.

You can't make a chrysalis out of a butterfly, but you can, of course, and you very naturally do, criticize the butterfly's appearance and markings as some small satisfaction to your rumpled feelings.

"That hat doesn't suit you a bit," Crystal said of the most successful hat Bianca owned, and of 'a hair-dressing experiment of Pansy's, pitifully clumsy, "You should always do your hair like that!"

In fitting rooms she invariably advocated the wrong garment, spoke against the one that became her daughter. But Bianca was never swayed by her opinion. She had an immutable faith in her own instincts, overruled as these had been for years by Aunt Marcia's choices and she only listened, bewildered, to Crystal's pronouncements, meanwhile wondering why Wantage should have

expatiated to her upon her mother's wonderful knowledge in this field. Yet Crystal chose her own clothes, she admitted, with considerable acumen.

The antagonism between mother and daughter, unformulated yet undeniable, was evidenced only by Crystal's depreciating remarks upon the girl. Life was too full for both of them, and the presence of strangers too constant, for the development of any more intimate opposition.

CHAPTER IX.

Ned Wantage, presenting himself early to assist in Crystal's installation in her new quarters, was surprised to encounter Ferdie Kendal, the airman, with whom he had had some talk in Mrs. Carr's London drawing-room.

"I left you on the other side, didn't I?"

"Yes, but crossing the pond is the best thing we flyers do. Have you seen the flapper here? Great little flapper, what? Struck me cross-eyed, you know, to find out the fair Crys had a kid seventeen years old! Why, she must be thirty-five, and here I've been taking her for about my own age—which is twenty-seven! Stung!"

"Mrs. Carr is still a young woman," said Wantage distantly, discovering that he didn't like Kendal.

"Oh, well, opinions differ. I never did like old ladies. I'm transferring my attentions to the flapper!"

He did not know how much Crystal had had to do with his change of object, nor that, if she had not willed otherwise, he would have continued to find her ripeness more attractive than Bianca's youth. The clever woman had noticed just a shade of differentiation in her daughter's manner toward this newest recruit, and though she liked him herself, and his attentions, she had handed him over without a quiver. Bianca must get married and get out

of the way. Why shouldn't she marry Kendal?

Flying, like going to sea, is a *metier* that makes for philandering, and though the somewhat dissolute young man had certainly, at present, no thoughts of settling down, the problem of making him think about it might be easily solved by the determined mother of a pretty girl. On Bianca's side there was that shade of difference in manner. Anyhow the combination was well worth trying.

To Pansy Sloan, not to her mother, Bianca spoke with shy enthusiasm of the airman.

"Why Pansy"—she was fifty-three, but everybody called her Pansy—"Pansy, he's *the* Kendal! Nobody seems to think any more about things that happened in the war, and I don't believe mother even knows it, but he did the most splendid exploits—I used to read about them—I cut his picture out of the *Graphic*. He flies professionally now, of course, but he was just a mechanic to begin with, and not expected to fly, and he went up in an emergency as an observer, and the pilot was killed, and he climbed over into his seat, and not only brought the plane down safely, but *got his German!* He told me all about it."

"Oh, he did, did he?"

"Yes, that was what he got his D. S. M. for! He has a fine war record. I'm so proud to know him!"

He had a good war record, Pansy was forced to admit, but in her opinion, when one had said that, one had said everything that was to be said in Ferdie Kendal's favor. She remonstrated with Crystal for allowing him to be on friendly terms with her daughter.

"Don't you know he's a little rotter? Haven't you heard the stories about him? He was all right during the war, though even then on leave he hit the high spots pretty regularly, I imagine;

but nowadays he's traveling to a swift finish!"

"You mean he likes a drink, and has a heart?"

"Both positively to a standstill, and a dash of coke thrown in—so they say. You ought not to let him come around that girl!"

"Oh, she likes him!"

"You said it, and that's why you should give him his passports."

But Crystal continued to smile on Kendal, and to throw him and Bianca together. By now the man's facile passions were roused by her dark, delicate prettiness and by her worshipful listening when he talked, as he did with cad-dish freedom, of his heroic deeds.

One evening Crystal established them in her own boudoir, a shamelessly comfortable little place of deep divans, deep chairs, low, solid smoking tables and an open fire. She had given the man an excellent dinner and after it, judging the time ripe, she left them.

"You ought to have a fag, too," Ferdie said presently, having finished his liqueur and lighted his own cigarette. "Don't you smoke? You ought to smoke. I like to see a girl smoking—shows she's a good Indian."

In Chipping Barton ladies do not smoke, but Bianca had been at it of late, and knew that she could manage the act creditably, though as yet she was indifferent to its pleasures.

"Well—give me one——"

He brought her his case, lit a match and performed for her the chivalrous service which recent years have added to man's obligations in the way of chairs and doors. Bianca did not manage her end of it very well. The cigarette scorched along one side and did not light. Presently, however, she noticed that his hands were trembling, so perhaps it was not altogether her fault after all.

She looked up inquiringly, and in the same instant he plucked the cigarette

from her lips and roughly set his own mouth there. His hot hands were on her bare arms, he was electric, vibrant, his nearness perturbing. She was frightened, but—such was the hold his calling had on her imagination—not displeased.

He began to kiss her neck, and she looked at the sleek hair, like black paint on the head just at a level now with her eyes, and said to herself, "It's been up among the stars——" and thrilled to the thought.

"Oh, gee——" he said thickly at last, "I've got to have you, kid. You like me, don't you? You do, don't you? Well, you'll let me make you like me—won't you?"

They hadn't an idea in common, a taste, a tradition. Even the war which Bianca had seen as a chapter of the crusades, with every aviator engaged on the Allied side a Knight-Templar at the least, had presented itself to Kendal as a thing of excitements and strange lusts and horrible discomforts and dangers; he had been conscripted into it, and of its causes he had taken the trouble to know only that Germany was a mad dog, and the kaiser the responsible party. But he had a real passion for flying, and having performed some spectacular feats after the war and carried away a prize or two, had found it profitable as well as pleasant to go on flying. No one questioned his nerve, which was even excessive. His way of life, however, had recently made the big airplane companies less eager to deal with him, and just at the moment he was rather strapped. Crystal had counted on this, and had taken occasion to mention to him that Bianca had nearly twenty thousand pounds.

Her daughter's fortune always appeared to Crystal as a lump sum. It would never have occurred to her that it was possible to live upon its income, and she had been annoyed to find that

the girl, until she married or until she reached twenty-one, had no control over the principal. Even a successful actress, at the beginning of her season, and fresh from furnishing an apartment on Central Park West, to say nothing of her autumn wardrobe, might like to dip into such a sum upon occasion. That was an additional reason for getting Bianca married early.

Kendal, to do him justice, was not thinking at all about the money. Bianca was a lovely figure of a girl, her slim arms gleaming against the dull black of her dress, her geranium lips provocative of a thirst that seemed insatiable, her eyes, in the brief seconds when they would meet his, beautiful with adoration. He was immensely delighted with the situation and quite without ulterior thoughts; delighted to be adored and doubly delighted with her yielding him the permission to put his arm around her and to kiss almost as much as he liked.

"I certainly fell on my feet! You're a peach!" he told her.

It did cross Bianca's mind that love might be spoken more poetically, but she repulsed the suggestion. Beautiful phrases about it were usually insincere, she decided, and strong feeling tended to make people inarticulate. If Kendal could only breathe that funny way and say the short, jerky things he did, it was because his emotions were too much for him. He felt, of course, unutterable and very beautiful things! Perhaps some other time he would tell them to her!

Bianca had always expected the sort of wedding she had seen once or twice in Chipping Barton, a church affair with flowers and invitations and presents, and she had thought of it as taking place, perhaps, in the spring or early summer. But Crystal, when she came in later in the evening and was told of the engagement, said coolly,

"What a good idea for you two to get married. Ferdie is one of the best, Bianca—and she's a good kid, too, Ferdie, if I do say it. When do you plan to do the deed?"

"Can't be too soon to suit me!" Kendal said ardently. "Anything wrong with to-morrow?"

"What a curious quality of casualness for wedding arrangements," thought Bianca. She was struck with the almost indecorous haste to get the whole business over.

"Don't be ridiculous!"

"Well, next week——"

"Say Thursday of next week——" said Crystal thoughtfully. Bianca stared. But between her lover's unreasonable urgency and her mother's amazing support of him, she found herself yielding, with some bewilderment. People didn't get married like that in England! But this was America, of course, and perhaps it was the custom over here.

It seemed to be Crystal's idea, and Ferdie's, to go down to the city hall to get married, but when the bride said, distressed, that it must be done in church, they yielded on that point, and on the Thursday, with no more preparation than for one of their frequent joy rides, Crystal and Pansy, Bianca and Kendal and Ned Wantage, imperiously summoned to be of the party and obedient as ever, though gravely disapproving, piled into a car, crossed the park, drove down Fifth Avenue and turned east along Twenty-ninth Street.

The short ceremony, in the tiny chapel, Bianca found moving and beautiful enough. Crystal looked smug, Wantage like a man whose investments were going wrong, and Pansy supplied the tears in abundant quantities. She had almost quarreled with her adored Crystal over the marriage, and had begged Wantage vainly to try to prevent it. He would have been glad to

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do so, but recognized his powerlessness; he felt a sort of guilt, as of connivance, in the mere watching of it.

It was typical of the proceedings that Kendal, who since the night of his engagement hadn't seen much of Bianca—a trousseau requiring concentrated thought, if it is to be assembled in ten days' time—leaned toward her from his seat at the wheel as they drove uptown, and said:

"Shall we go anywhere? Is there any place you want to go?"

"We're going somewhere for lunch, aren't we?"

"I mean away somewhere—honey-moon—Bermuda or Niagara Falls——" His eyes devoured her face fiercely, so that color rose there; she was glad when he had to look away to steer. He began to sing, under his breath but so that the words reached her, a suggestive song a good many years old—"When I Get You Alone To-night." His inflections, and his possessive eyes, gave the lines every meaning.

"There'll be no one around to hear—

There'll be no one around to fear——"

Bianca felt suddenly that she had been married too hastily—this was the sort of thing that it took some time to get used to. She admired Kendal, and supposed herself to love him, but she had a sensation now as of a gulf yawning in front of her, into which she was required to leap, with only his hand for support. Probably it was going to be all right, and she would land softly on firm ground. Of course it was going to be all right! But the leap was ahead of her.

She looked back into the tonneau. Crystal was being very entertaining back there, for the benefit of Wantage, who listened abstractedly. Pansy was still crying, raising her handkerchief to her eyes at half-minute intervals. Bianca felt vaguely irritated with Pansy for crying like that on her wedding day.

CHAPTER X.

Pansy cheered up in time for lunch at Rector's, which became uproarious as the party was augmented from moment to moment by friends and acquaintances, whom Crystal presented with triumph to her daughter in her new rôle.

Wantage, who found that conversational contributions from himself were not only uncalled for, but could only be made at the top of his lungs and in competition with a dozen other speakers, let his covert gaze shift from Crystal to Bianca and from Bianca to Kendal, with mixed and mainly unpleasant feelings. The girl seemed utterly out of place in this vulgar gathering, and the two who stood nearest to her offered no alleviation to the contrast.

He discovered in himself a new disposition to pass sentence on Crystal, who in ten years had been able, for him, to do no wrong. But then it was he only, in those other days, who had suffered as a result of her vagaries, her conscienceless repudiation of responsibilities, her utter lack of heart. It was a different matter to look at little Bianca, sedate in her white serge suit and the white hat that crushed her hair to the level of her delicate brows, to watch her frightened, fascinated glances at the man beside her, and to contrast with pain the soft, utterly young curves of her mouth and cheek and chin with the records of coarse living on that other face.

It might not be Crystal's fault, he mused; it happens often enough that an exquisite young girl is not to be restrained, by any means, from casting herself into the arms of a vicious boulder. Nature has strange ways of her own, and goals to reach which are hidden from us. But at least the mother need not seem so obviously delighted with the arrangement.

The meal was over, at length, the last

of the women had dawdled into her gloves and onto her feet, and the moment came when Bianca, after effusive farewells and good wishes, was to step into the car with Kendal and be carried away.

Wantage gripped her little white-gloved hand, when his turn came to say good-by, and held it several seconds, looking at her earnestly. She seemed so dreadfully young.

Bianca was surprised to read so much solicitude, so much good-will in the face of a man who, she believed, disliked her. It was a good omen, she thought. One got notions about things, got offended or frightened, while in reality people were as nice and kind as possible. That sudden shrinking from Ferdie which she had felt, coming up in the car, would prove to be just as baseless, and once she was alone with him, she would be swiftly reassured.

Kendal drove her to rooms of his not far from Times Square, very masculine rooms, untidy, smelling of stale tobacco, but big and well-furnished in a style of heavy comfort. He was in a sentimental mood, and establishing her in a leather-covered morris chair, he sat himself upon the arm of it to gloat and worship.

She felt a little breathless, tired and excited at once. She wanted him to leave off kissing her; she still thought that she liked one kiss at a time. The tension of endlessly repeated kisses soon became intolerable. Before long she was crying half hysterically and the man roused to anxious sympathy.

He carried her into the bedroom and pulled down the blinds, spilled cologne on her pillow, much to Bianca's distress, and with only one half-remorseful kiss, shut the door behind him and flung back to the big outside room. His own nerves were clamoring, and he condemned to solitude for several hours, since he couldn't well show himself downtown alone to-day. A strong

impulse descended upon him, which he fought valiantly; he quite meant, now that he was married, to cut out the dope. It was a fool's trick at any time, as of course he had always known, even while using it most.

It was with the sensations of a victor that he poured out and drank a stiff high ball, and after it another and several others. He began to feel cheerful almost at once, and very proud of himself for his moral superiority, in that he hadn't done something so much worse, but as he drank, his convivial instincts sprang to life. He felt the need of a cheerful crowd around him, since he had to let Bianca alone for a while. And Bianca herself, what she needed was a little gayety.

Her mother and Pansy Sloan and that bunch were all well enough, but they were too slow. He'd show his wife what it was like to travel with live people, he'd give a party for her, right here in this room, this very night. He had entertained here more than once before, had had everything sent in from a restaurant—even the drinks he had, you may be sure, a way of procuring—and he knew, too, just whom he would ask.

"Come around and meet m'wife," he telephoned to a dozen different numbers. "You don't know my wife? You didn't know little Ferdie was roped and tied? Say, she's some kid! Come and cheer us up, and bring any happy sports you know along! See you soon—"by!"

CHAPTER XI.

"Feelin' better now?"

Bianca woke with a start to the green gloom of the shaded room and, playing over her face, a breath that brought a wave of nausea; her head was aching and she asked herself, for a bewildered moment, where she was.

"Oh! Oh, yes," she said heroically—wasn't she the wife of a hero—"Yes,

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I'm all right. Will you turn on the light? I'll get up—"What's that noise?"

"Bunch of hot sports out there," he told her. "Just tuning up—they're not making a noise! By and by we'll make a noise."

"People—to-night!" But even as she made the protest she realized that for some unfathomable reason she was not unwilling that there should be people. "You go back to them—Ferdie. I'll dress and come right in."

She had in her suit case a little white crêpe de Chine dress which she had planned to wear this evening, as being especially bridal. But she had wanted to be bridal for her husband, not for these noisy people whom he had so inexplicably called in. She put on instead one of the colored frocks her marriage had justified, a peach-colored georgette, very becoming, and because she was looking so pale after the stormy day, she set a touch of rouge on her cheeks as she had seen Crystal do. Then she went out into the other room, and stopped in amazement at what she saw.

The four or five tables had been set together to form one big one, and over them cloths had been spread and covers laid. The inevitable oyster plates multiplied themselves down either side, and bottles, it seemed to the stunned mistress of the apartment, stood everywhere. The guests, men and women who looked surprisingly queer even to her inexperienced eyes, were having cocktails and laughing and yelling jokes at each other. As she stood staring, somebody shouted, "Here comes the bride!" and at once the attention of the room was focused upon her.

Women with big powdery bosoms, smeary lips and coarse if cheerful faces came and kissed her and assured her that she had in her husband, "a hot sport"—it seemed their highest term of praise. Men said things to her, and loudly to Kendal of her, of which she

fortunately did not get the drift. She found herself at the table presently, eating oysters but able to eat nothing else for the pain in her head which the tumult around her made so much worse, and which even the half glass of champagne she ventured made for the moment excruciating.

Nobody noticed that she didn't eat; they all ate and drank and smoked and told stories and threw bits of food at each other and made love to each other, with perfect frankness and happiness.

Even at the very first Bianca was not happy; quite apart from her headache and that element of discomfort that had crept into her anticipations about the future. These men and women were horrible, she thought, with sick resentment that they should be sitting at what, after all, was her table. She hadn't liked everybody she had met at Pansy's, nor everybody who came to Crystal's extravagantly appointed flat, but there hadn't been anybody at either of these places who was like this. Why, there was as much difference between free-and-easy Pansy and these women, as there was between Pansy and, say, Aunt Marcia herself. They said things. Somebody with red hair—brown roots, she noticed maliciously, having learned from Crystal to scrutinize roots—was pawing Ferdie now, wreathing a flabby fat arm around his neck, smiling odiously and branching into sentimental reminiscences.

As the evening went on and the gaiety increased, Bianca's disgust rose to match it, a steadily mounting disgust that in time must break dikes and result in decisive action. Her husband was a long way off, at the other end of the table, and the girl had hardly looked at him after the first, being so absorbed in watching, with a sort of fascinated repulsion, the men and women nearer at hand.

The man on her left had been too *entreprenant* from the start; as the meal

progressed and what discretion he might be supposed to have disappeared in drink, he became uncomfortably, at length impossibly so. When he laid his hand upon her knee Bianca started up angrily and called on Ferdie.

"Gee, he's dead to the world!" a chorus announced to her.

She ran to the other end of the table nevertheless, and found him indeed, his head on the shoulder of the red-haired one, in a state so sluggish that he seemed not to understand when she whispered vehemently that one of those men had insulted her, that she didn't like his friends and wished he'd send them away.

"Hot sports——" he assured her by way of comfort. "No harm—hot sports——"

She stood a moment looking down at him, choking with fury, disgust and fear. Then she walked with trembling but deliberate legs into the inner room, pinned on her hat, jerked a dark dolman from her suit case and found her hand bag.

She had to face the outer room again, to walk through it quickly, and gain the door. She need not have been afraid, she found; of the people there, those who were not too drunk to notice stared at her, but no one remonstrated or made a move to stop her. Not waiting for the elevator, lest after all Kendal should struggle up and after her, Bianca hurried down seven flights of stairs.

Outside, clean air blew on her face and the sane noises of traffic soothed her ears. She hailed a taxi, and gave Crystal's address.

CHAPTER XII.

There was quietude in the long drawing-room with its soft, low lights, its high colors toned now to a soothing key, its flower scents crossed only by the trail of a pair of Philip Morris cigarettes, and no other sound in it than

the murmur of Ned Wantage's voice. Bianca stood on the threshold a moment, breathing deeply of its safe peace, and then Crystal turned her head sharply, and saw her daughter.

"What the devil——" she cried, startled out of all restraint by Bianca's appearance, by her face which advertised disaster. "What's up? Where's Ferdie? Anybody hurt?"

"He's all right. He's at home," said the girl, coming forward to drop into a deep chair at her mother's side. "He—I was quite wrong about him. I don't understand. I know he is very brave, but—but he isn't a person one can be married to."

"Well, you found that out a bit too late, it appears to me," said Crystal with a high note of truculence. "Do you mean to say you've come all the way uptown at this time of night to tell me you've fussed with Ferdie?"

Bianca leaned her dark head against the chair back, her hands lay limply along its arms. She felt sick and shaken still, but at rest now; her mother's sharp voice hardly disturbed her. It had not occurred to her to doubt her welcome here.

"I suppose I was an awful fool," she said dreamily. "Oh, I was—I know I was! I'll say it all for you, mother, and then you won't need to say it. This isn't a quarrel, you see, as you seem to think. It is just that, as soon as I tried being married to that man, it turned out that it wouldn't do. It was all my fault, I suppose, for not realizing sooner. But how on earth is one to tell?"

Wantage had got to his feet.

"You don't want me here," he said. His eyes were very kind and very full of satisfaction as they rested on Bianca, but the girl's eyes were on a vague slant to a figure on the nearest rug. "I'll say good-night, and, Miss Bianca—congratulations!"

"Congratulations on what, I'd like to know!" broke in Crystal with exasper-

ation. "You're not to go yet, Ned, either—I want you to take that little idiot back to her husband. If she thinks I'm going to be saddled with her again, she has another guess coming!"

The brutal words broke through Bianca's lethargy; she sat up, her eyes wide again. All the bitter sayings she had heard from her aunts about her mother's selfishness and heartlessness crowded back to her now, in confirmation of what she now heard, which otherwise she would have doubted. The intolerable expression, "saddled with her," bit through her fatigue, to the quick.

"I'll saddle nobody!" She stood up gallantly. "I have my own money. I'll go to a hotel——"

Wantage was speaking, with the authority of controlled anger.

"Crystal, have I understood you? You refuse your daughter a home here? You turn her out?"

"Turn her out nothing! She turned herself out when she married Ferdie. She was keen about him at this time yesterday, crazy to marry him, ready to talk yards about him to anybody who'd listen. I've been married three times myself, and maybe you'll admit I ought to know something about men and love. There's been some silly row, that's all. I send her back for her own good. They'll make it up by to-morrow. Bianca, I thought your aunts brought you up to be a religious girl. Didn't you promise to-day to love, honor, and obey Ferdie Kendal? Doesn't your promise in church mean anything to you? Isn't marriage a sacrament?"

She had the right tack now, she felt, and she elaborated her new position feverishly in the hope of obliterating from their memories that first frank revelation of her feelings.

"I don't know how it is," Bianca said, "I always thought I believed what Mr. Bradish told me, but indeed I can't feel

at all that I ought to go and stay with Ferdie Kendal."

It was to Wantage rather than to her mother that she spoke, and at least half to herself. "One could always obey—if one were willing to be a slave—but it's not possible to love or honor a man who gets like that—— He was—— I don't think I can have made you understand, mother, that he was—drunk."

"To-day!" cried Wantage, who had known of course that Kendal drank.

"How drunk?" asked Crystal combatively; she was prepared to defend a mild exhilaration.

"Oh—how do I know? Disgusting. It all—— I can't talk about it! I thought you'd help me. Well, I'll help myself then, but I'll die before I go back to him!"

A daughter at large, known not to be living with her husband and stirring criticism of her mother for not receiving her, was almost as undesirable to Crystal as an eclipsing young beauty under her own roof.

"I am acting for your best good, Bianca, when I tell you that you will and must go back to him. If he drinks, it's your business to break him of it. You ought to see all this for yourself, but since you don't, I have to point it out to you. You talk about money—what money have you got, I'd like to know? You've drawn two quarters in advance, to pay for your trousseau!"

"My money was to be mine when I married!"

"Yes, and I hope you may get it next year! It takes months to settle an estate, years sometimes. And it's on the other side, at that. You're penniless, and I won't give you a cent, and no friend of mine will lend you money, and the only friends you have are my friends. And I won't take you in—that's flat. You've no place to go but to your husband's home, and that's where you're going. Ned, phone for a taxi, will you? And then I want you to

take her right straight back where she belongs."

There was a strange look on Wantage's face, very bitter and stern, with a shade of scoffing. It was the look of a man from whose eyes scales have fallen, showing irretrievably wasted days and efforts, folly unbelievable, illusions which now it seemed a child could not have held. Bianca watched him breathlessly. She had felt, or had thought she felt, his sympathy on her side from the first; she had been remembering his warm handclasp of the morning. She looked to him for help of some sort or at least for refusal to carry out Crystal's outrageous order. The shock to her was commensurate when, after perhaps a minute's hesitation, he nodded sharply and picking up the telephone sent down the request for a taxi.

She sat down again, feeling cold, feeling overpowered and helpless. It was true that in ready money she had only some eighteen dollars in the bag on her wrist. Pansy would take her in—but only until Crystal learned of it and ordered her to shut her doors. Perhaps, too, the law made one live with one's husband, perhaps Kendal could call on one of those big policemen to force her back to him. There was divorce, of course, but how does a friendless person with no money go about getting a divorce? And the taxi was coming, and Wantage, a jailer now, was pacing up and down the long room with his head bent, while Crystal, her mouth drawn into ugly lines, tapped impatiently with ringed fingers on her chair arm.

The telephone rang, and Wantage, answering it, dropped the words, "all right," back into the receiver and approaching Bianca said briefly, "Taxi's here. Come on."

She stood up, as one going to execution. She would not look at Crystal as she went out. Wantage held open the door and passed after her into the elevator. It was not until they were walk-

ing together toward the main entrance of the building, at last out of any one's hearing, that he spoke.

"I am not going to take you back to that man," he said.

And to the taxi driver his direction was, "The park, and keep going around till I stop you——"

Bianca stepped into the cab with a heart that beat again, and now violently. Her head whirled, but though his words now were unreconcilable with his behavior upstairs a minute ago, she believed them, not only because she so needed to, but because of the ring his voice had. Ever since the episode on the *Adriatic* she had believed that she hated Ned Wantage. But now all pride of that sort was gone; let him scold her like a child if he wanted to, so long as he helped her, so long as she could find shelter under a strength which she felt to be so *puissant*.

"You aren't going to take me back?" she questioned for the reassurance of the repeated promise.

"Good God, no! I never was more relieved in my life than when you came in just now. I could see what that fellow is. It's a hard thing to do, having to stand back and watch nice girls mess up their lives. But it does no good to interfere. You had to see a light for yourself." And as he spoke it struck him that his sister, his friends, had for years vainly tried to shake his infatuation for Crystal, which to-night was shattered for all time. "It's no good interfering," he repeated heavily, "when a person thinks that he or she's in love."

"What I can't understand now, is—what made me think so."

"No, nor I. One can't——"

"It seemed all to go, like water running through my fingers. And yet yesterday——"

"Yes, yesterday——"

"But why," she asked suddenly, "did

you make me think you were against me, too?"

With an exclamation he thrust her back into her corner, but Bianca, too, had seen what he had seen—Kendal's head, disheveled, wild, and anxious, leaning from the window of another taxi that was driving madly for the house they had left.

"That's why," Wantage said. "I thought he was probably due soon. He'll make trouble, no doubt. And between him and your mother—— You see, I have no right to help you—only the will."

"I didn't think he even noticed when I went out! He was—— Oh, disgusting! Leaning against—somebody, and talking that thick way people seem to think is funny. And I spoke to him, and he——"

She was telling him everything now, about the appalling evening through which she had passed. Wantage listened, sympathetic and interested, while through the background of his mind wheeled a procession of Crystals, Crystal as he had first known her, when her yellow hair and her arch eyes and her high spirits had enthralled the serious young man that he was; Crystal in her moments of pathos; Crystal tormenting him with half yieldings yet never yielding; Crystal dominant, imposing upon his imagination her image as she liked to see herself. And then the sorry Crystal at the end, who gave all the others away—and gave him his freedom.

He was free. The Crystal complex was broken up. To the bitterness of his disillusion there succeeded, now, a great relief.

"It's quite true what she said," Bianca was telling him, "that I haven't any money. Only not quite four pounds—eighteen dollars and some change!"

"But that's very simple. You have money in England. I'll advance you

what you need. There's no difficulty there——"

"Oh, would you?" She rested a moment on the comfort of that. "Then you think he'll try to find me?"

"Of course he'll try to find you! He's had nothing to disillusion him, as you have. You ought not to see him, he'll make your life wretched—and you're too young to be alone. Let's think hard now, about what is the best thing for you to do."

Bianca thought hard, but she knew no one who was not primarily Crystal's friend. "I must—*hide!*" she concluded at last.

He had a plan by this time. "The Martha Washington for to-night. And to-morrow I'll take you south with me—to my sister, down on the Eastern Shore. No one can possibly find you there, no one would think of looking for you there. You needn't even wear your own name, if you'd rather not—neither of them. We'll think up a brand-new one for you to go under."

"Oh, but it's too much——" she protested. "I couldn't think—your sister won't want a perfect stranger coming to stay with her!"

"She will, she'll love you, and you her. That's settled. That's what we'll do."

She felt a terrible encroacher, but from sheer inability to imagine any other course, she agreed at last, and he took her to the hotel.

CHAPTER XIII.

Ned Wantage's sister, Elizabeth Cary, and the late Misses Jermyn would have found each other very congenial, since nothing draws people together more quickly than a common aversion. Even the relatives of Charley Smith, frankly of the bounder class, to which Crystal had turned for a second mate in reaction against the high-nosed stiffness of the Jermyns, would

have been welcome in Elizabeth's drawing-room as long as they sprinkled h's there in expression of their real feelings about poor Charley's ex-wife. The present husband, a gentleman sadly insensible of his privileges, and never resident with his wife, would have echoed the prevailing sentiment less agreeably to Mrs. Cary.

It was the bugbear of her life that Ned might become the creature's fourth husband.

Until the evening of Bianca's wedding day the same possibility had been Wantage's most roseate hope, the prospect that had kept him at Crystal's side for nearly a dozen years. She was wont to dangle it before him at any sign of restiveness.

"If I could have a husband I could respect!" she used to say.

The influence of the best-beloved sister is negligible, of course, beside that of the other woman. Beth Cary had known this, had never openly denounced Crystal, had confined her efforts to setting Ned's path about, when he visited her, with seductive and suitable young girls. The girls fell in readily enough with her plans, for most of them were half in love with him; he had become a legend on the Eastern Shore, for insusceptibility and dark romantic attraction, from which his known enslavement to an actress detracted nothing, and she who could have taken him away from Crystal would have prided herself justly on a prize and an achievement. Poor Beth had begun to believe that no such girl existed.

Her welcome to Bianca was the warmer, when the first, frightened suspicions roused by her brother's night letter, were dissipated at meeting by the instant perception of the girl's quality.

"What a jolly idea of Ned's to bring you to me!" she exclaimed. "A new person's a godsend down here, as he knows. I hope you'll stay a long, long time!"

"You're too kind, really. I feel positively *brazen*—Has he told you about me?"

"Not yet—except that you're the daughter of his old friend, Mrs. Carr, and that we're to call you Blanche Delany, although it isn't your name! He can tell me everything else while you rest a while up here—I'm sure you'll want to. Yes, it is pretty out of that window, isn't it? I'll send your tea up, shall I, and later on, my little colored girl to help you dress? Dinner's at seven."

She hurried down, to give Ned tea and hear the explanation of Bianca.

Wantage told her everything without reserve, ending with a fervent, "I'm through with Crystal!" that warmed the sister's heart. It did not take her long to surmise that the stubborn nail had been knocked out by another one.

"But you're not through with the girl, are you? She's lovely, poor little thing. It's too bad about that crazy marriage. But she will simply have to divorce the man."

"Oh, nothing of that sort," said Wantage hastily. "That is—she must lose Kendal, of course—but not in my interest. Why, she's not twenty!" To Elizabeth this fact did not seem necessarily a disqualification for being loved, and she smiled secretly.

The eastern shore of the Chesapeake is a warm, colorful land of gentlemen's farms, and others', of delightful old houses set among tall trees, of winding blue reaches of water and of sleek cattle. Bianca saw it first in December, when the woods were purple and the air sometimes keen. She loved the lazy country on sight, and Beth's big old house with its high ceilings and long arched corridors and uneven floors, its brown mahogany and old silver and newest patterned cretonnes, and the terraced garden set with bitter, fragrant box. It was all very reminiscent of England, after New York

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apartments and ways of living. When Sunday came, one went to church—Crystal would have found the quaintness and deadliness of the life epitomized in that one circumstance.

Elizabeth's husband was a man interested only in his farming plans and voluble upon them with other men; to women, except his wife, he never spoke if he could help it. There were three children, a boy of eight, a girl of five and a baby of extraordinary fascinations who at their first interview, reduced Bianca's heart to pulp. Her own childhood had been almost uncompanioned, and as for babies, she exclaimed to Beth, "I don't believe I ever saw a baby before, out of a pram!"

Beth's baby had flaxen curls, blue eyes and blue smocks, and Bianca in coral pink, riding the child on her shoulder, arms up to hold it and light figure swaying, made a picture which Wantage watched pensively. Beth, with her instant sentimental applications, had put something into his mind which, he was ready to swear, had not been there before. His course toward Bianca had been motivated by pure chivalry and friendly feeling, he told himself; always he had thought of her as a person of another generation—why, he had been in love with her mother for years! She might have been his stepchild. She was not going to be his stepchild, that was one sure thing!

Mrs. Cary had not for years been flattered with so much of her brother's society as he now gave her. He went occasionally to Baltimore on business; once he announced that he must go to New York, and she trembled lest the siren put her spell on him again, but he returned, after adroit reconnoiterings from Pansy's home as a base, to report to Bianca that no one had an idea where she had gone, that he had satisfied Crystal's questions with the partial truth of having left her at the Martha Washington, and that Kendal was re-

ported to have flying plans that had diverted his mind from his runaway wife.

He did not tell her, of course, about the scene with Crystal, which had been unpleasant to a degree. They had had quarrels before, necessarily, but quarrels in which the heightening of his passion had been from first to last the objective of which she had never lost sight, and she had been angry with an unflinching regard to her looks, had let her eyes blaze, tossed her head haughtily, gazed at him with pale, provocative disdain. This time she had been really furious, and had forgotten such considerations. Her eyes had lowered at him, sinister pin points in a flushed face, the mouth straight, the whole countenance set in hateful, down-drawn lines. She looked an unforgettably revolting fifty, and if before this interview there had remained to her a chance of getting Wantage back, she lost it in the first five minutes.

"What have you done with the girl? I wonder you have the face to come into my apartment. Kendal's looking for you."

"Telephone him that I'm stopping at the Astor, then—shall be up a couple of days more. Hadn't you better calm yourself, Crystal? Remember that it was in my hearing you repudiated your daughter—refused flatly to take her in."

"Because her place was with her husband! Marriage means something to me—" He reflected that it had indeed meant a good deal! "I trusted her to you, to take her back to Ferdie. I told him so that night, when he came here looking for her. He rushed back and—didn't find her. You'll be indicted for abduction, next thing you know. You've double-crossed me on this, and I'm not going to take it lying down—that's flat. Where is she?"

"I took her to the Martha Washington—a respectable hostelry, you'll admit. Not a resort of abductors. You

can see her name on the register if you'd like to look for it. That ended my responsibility. She's a married woman, and therefore independent of you, and a human being, and therefore independent of Kendal if she wants to be. She has some money. Why worry?"

Crystal worried, it appeared, lest her daughter had been inducted into the white-slave trade under Wantage's auspices. He did not feel called upon to listen to her exposition of this anxiety, and withdrew. Afterward she telephoned him at his hotel, with cloying sweetness and penitence, dwelling on past days and begging him to come to see her again. He might safely have done so, he felt, he was armored now against any assaults she might make on the heart once so utterly hers, but he was conscious of no wish to see her again, and of the strongest distaste for the reconciliation scene she was no doubt planning.

To Kendal, presenting himself promptly that evening, Wantage was suavely explanatory.

"Mrs. Carr asked me to escort her daughter to you. Learning from—Mrs. Kendal—he hated to use the name, but its formality sounded well—"learning that you were—not in a fit state to receive her, I took her instead, at her request, to the Martha Washington. Consult their register for that night if it interests you. I have no concern with any later movements of the lady, who, I understand, has money of her own. Very probably she has gone back to England, to her friends there. If there is nothing more that I can do for you—good evening!"

CHAPTER XIV.

There was neither Bianca Kendal nor Bianca Jermyn sojourning with Mrs. Cary, but one Blanche Delany, presented as a young Virginia cousin who had

lived a good deal abroad. The assumed name, even Bianca believed, made assurance utterly sure, since now no rumor of her whereabouts could reach the two of whom she was almost equally afraid.

In Chipping Barton public opinion and the law, back the husband. Bianca had heard seldom of a wife in her position, and never with sympathy. At the bottom of her heart, underlying the sound reasoning on the subject which she heard both from Wantage and Elizabeth, and to which she gave her own intellectual adherence, lay the conviction that a really good person—Aunt Marcia, say, if one could imagine such wild happenings to Aunt Marcia—would feel it her duty to live with Kendal and reclaim him.

If Kendal, sober and repentant, came to urge this, she doubted whether she could withstand him. And if Crystal knew where she was, the meeting with her husband would be swiftly arranged in days if not in hours. But she shrank passionately from such a stultifying of her revolt, such a disposition of her future. Meanwhile the hidden life on the Eastern Shore was peaceful and satisfying, Beth made her feel at home in the pleasant way of Southern people, there was Wantage to ride with and talk with, there were dances and dinners at the neighboring houses, the children, always accessible and never unavoidable, and even on stormy days when nobody called, the makings of a bridge table under the roof of Fairacres.

The months drifted by, and an early and exquisite spring was upon them. It became a delight to ride again, and to push into the woods and dismount and gather wildflowers, violets, and great branches of dogwood for Elizabeth's vases. In the enjoyment of so much new beauty Bianca forgot again the problems that had troubled her occasionally in the winter days, what was to become of her, how long might she stay

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in this safety to which she had no claim?

When she brought up the latter question, Beth Cary who hoped and fully meant that she should establish a claim, begged her to stay on, upon grounds of humanity to a lonely chatelaine. To appease the girl's sensitive feelings she even did violence to her own, and allowed her to make a small payment for expenses. Of the three of them it was Wantage, probably, who worried most about Bianca's future.

With the spring there began to be sailing on the bay, motoring excursions with various objectives. A trip to Atlantic City was a relaxation occasionally indulged in by the Carys at this season, and Beth proposed it at the breakfast table on a morning in late April.

"It would be nice to run up there any day now. It's a lovely motor ride," she explained for Bianca's benefit.

"I shall love it, I'm sure—the country's so pretty now. But what is Atlantic City?"

"Miles of board walk—splendid hotels—all the luxuries of town— Oh, yes, and they keep the Atlantic Ocean up there, too. You sit in a rolling chair like an invalid and somebody pushes you. It's right amusing for a little while."

"Oh, like Brighton!"

"I reckon so—I've never been to Brighton. Nowadays there's a lot of flying there, too—it's an airport, you know."

"Flying!"

For a moment Elizabeth thought she had been tactless to offer this as an attraction, but looking at Bianca she saw that her exclamation had been drawn from her by no thought of her inconvenient husband. She had indeed the shy, romantic enthusiasm for the idea of mere flight itself which many people cherish in this age of its achievement. To the last generation it was a fool's dream, to the next it may hold

no more thrill than railway progression to-day; but to an imaginative person over whose childhood the skies arched empty, and who has watched their unbelievable invasion, the wonder must endure. It was, of course, through just this snare of fancy, this humility before the miracle worker, that her undoing had come.

"There's some sort of an aviation meet on next week. Shall we go up then?"

It was agreed and Wantage, wondering whether Kendal might not quite possibly take himself also to Atlantic City for events which might interest him even if he was to have no part in them, reflected on the size of the place, the wide spaces reserved in aviation fields for landings and ascents and the utter improbability of a man busy about his plane within, being able to recognize any one in the great dim circle of faces. Afterward, of course, with feelings of pride in unguessed psychic powers, he recalled that unreasonable foreboding, which at the time he rebuked. It was susceptible of a simpler explanation, of course. Every man in love is preternaturally alive to possible dangers threatening "her" head. When the man is forty and just awake to the fact that this new passion transcends what he could feel at twenty-five, by the measure of his own growth and matured authority, and when the danger has to do with a sleek-headed, vulgarly good-looking hero in his late twenties, it is not strange if he perceives it before even it is there.

Bianca's suit was powder-blue jersey, under a white polo coat, her hat white, with the white veil that gives the plainest woman some touch of allurements and makes a pretty one ravishing. Wantage drove, and she sat beside him. In the tonneau the Carys had with them one of the black-clad, elderly impoverished cousins whom most people forget and Beth always remembered to in-

clude in excursions like this one, and a girl and man picked from the breaking-up of a neighbor's house party. They were gay back there, and the uninteresting cousin Sally perhaps the gayest, but in front Bianca was pensive, Wantage grave with his secret presentiment.

"I have an odd sort of life, don't I?" she philosophized in the intimate strain she now used with him. "There was Chipping Barton—you remember it—and all my aunts who died, except the ones who married. It seems a queer thing to say of the place where one was brought up, but I don't believe there's anybody there whom I care much about seeing again, ever. And as for going back there to *live*! Then there was New York, and that was good fun, only so hectic. I always had a sort of tired, hot feeling behind my eyes, from not getting enough sleep, I suppose, but I was never sleepy. And now that's all gone, and there isn't anybody there I want to see, unless it's Pansy. She's nice, isn't she, even if she is rather vulgar?"

"She has a good heart," Wantage agreed.

"If mother ever goes back to England, I might get her to help me find something to do. But anything connected with the stage would mean his finding me. Oh, I don't want to see him again!"

"That's a sound instinct, I think. You mustn't see him. You know what I think you ought to do."

"Yes, and I mean to do it, of course. But I'd much rather wait for that too, until mother is out of the country."

"'A Bit Over' is playing to very good business," he said dubiously. "Still, you may be right. You'll certainly avoid unpleasantness by waiting. And the longer you wait, if it means waiting on the Eastern Shore, the better Beth will like it."

"She's so sweet to me. You all are

— What started me talking like this, was thinking what a short time I've known you, and yet this car holds my best friends on earth!"

"I wonder if you know what it means to me to have you say so."

She laughed suddenly. "Oh, do you remember how you jumped on me," she was beginning to pick up American phrases, inevitably; "on the *Adriatic*, for being frightened in that storm? I was furious. For the longest time I couldn't forgive you. Of course, we were hardly friends at all, then. Should you be as cross as that now, I wonder, if such a thing happened again?"

"God helping me," said Wantage seriously, "I should be a good deal crosser!"

She had expected a different answer, and her slender eyebrows leaped up.

"Oh, ask Beth about it," he said hastily.

But she hadn't an opportunity to ask Beth in the next few hours, and afterward, for some time to come, the conversation dropped out of her thoughts.

Their objective reached in the late afternoon, and tea consumed, the necessary bathings, the necessary rites with various creams and powders, occupied the hours until dinner. Afterward there was a turn on the board walk and a play, everybody feeling inclined for the theater after a winter in the country. Bianca fell asleep that night to the sound of waves which mingled with the refrain of a taking waltz song.

The atmosphere of the pleasure city was stimulating, and she found herself enjoying with Beth and the other girl, Miss Blair, such an orgy of shopping as had been Pansy's daytime delight, an orgy so exhausting that when it was time to go home she slipped willingly enough into one of the chairs she had laughed at. In the afternoon the whole party repaired to the flying fields.

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loops, flew upside down, fell in tail spins and recovered at the moment when it seemed impossible that they could recover. Somebody dropped with a parachute.

People on the ground felt dizzy; the backs of their necks hurt and their eyes ached with the strain of following the maneuvers of specks against the luminous sky. Elizabeth gave up watching, and the eyes of the elderly cousin had "struck" long before. But Bianca's interest did not wane; she drifted with aimless eagerness where the crowds drifted. Cousin Sally was nervous and had to have all Wantage's attention, and it presently happened that, turning to speak to Elizabeth, the girl found herself surrounded by strangers. She could see Mrs. Cary's hat at a short distance however, and the next moment an exclamation beside her called her eyes to the sky again, where a man, with apparently a distaste for living, was transferring himself, at insane risk, from the wings of one airplane in flight, to another.

A timeless interval occurred; he crawled to the edge of the spread canvas, the other plane flew beneath, he all but dropped, but something was wrong, and the maneuver was repeated again and again until the successful transfer was accomplished. Bianca breathed again, and looked for Elizabeth's hat and could not find it.

The crowd melted from around her, bent on something of interest going on in another quarter, and Bianca, tired at last, stood still and let them drift away. Still she saw no member of her party, and she was not at all sure of the direction to take to look for them. She walked on slowly, her eyes flow on the ground.

Above, a ship whose engine had stalled suddenly, circled downward and, avoiding the maelstrom where so many wings flashed, volplaned to a landing not many yards from Bianca. De-

lighted, she watched it growing from a swallow's size to a hawk's, from a hawk's to that of a vehicle for a life-sized man, light as thistledown still as it drifted into the lower reaches of the air and so to a rubber ball's bounding stop. She ran toward it eagerly.

Ferdie Kendal climbed out of it.

He recognized her before she knew him; he came to meet her and took off his goggles, with hands which were shaking slightly.

"Well, kiddo, we meet again!" he said.

Bianca stared dumbly.

"My word, but I'm glad to see you! You had a nerve, walking off on me like that. Come and let's have a talk." He seized her arm. Unwillingly she found herself walking beside him.

"I *don't* want to talk with you," she said, nearly crying. "I am with some people. Let me go and find them, please. I have nothing to do with *you*!"

"Come now, aren't you my wife, girlie? Gee, and you're looking good enough to eat, too. Don't I get a kiss?"

"Oh, *no*!"

He obtained it, nevertheless. There was no one very near them, and the direction in which he drew her was even less peopled. Mechanics were hurrying toward his plane, however, and the sight of its descent was drawing stragglers.

"Let's get away from here!" he said. "Oh, the bus will be looked after. I want to talk to you. Not that we shan't have time enough! Now I've got you again, I'll keep a strangle hold on you. You belong to me, kid—get that? We'll telephone your friends. We should worry about them. You're coming home with me. You look so nice and sweet, who'd think you'd be mean enough to give a fellow the deal you did! You'll have to be extra sweet to make up for it, now. Have a heart, Bee! Don't be nasty—be nice!"

The old rough cajolery, the touch of the prickly cheek, fresh from the stream of cold air it had just fronted, the eyes before which Bianca's own had always dropped, stirred her now not to frightened, flattered response, but to sick disgust and panic, with no color of pleasure. She held him off as well as she could, and looked around frantically for Wantage.

"Now listen to me, kid. You're sore because I got stewed that night. Well, I don't blame you—it was a rotten bloomer on my part. Call me names and pull my hair if you want to! Only don't try to go away and lose me again—because it can't be did."

He talked rapidly, her arm gripped tightly in his as they walked. "Look here, you don't know the kind of a life I've had. I never had a chance, I brought myself up pretty much, and honest to Gawd, if I'd known a girl like you sooner— You don't know what a good boy I'm going to be, now that I've got you to keep house for me. I'll behave—you won't know me. I won't need any excitement outside of making love to you. I'll climb on the wagon for life. Now, what do you say?"

"Please let go of me! I don't care how you behave or what becomes of you—it's *nothing* to me! I don't want anything more to do with you—I want to find the people I came with—"

"Why, look here, you can't talk to me like that! D'you suppose I don't remember the night we got engaged, and that time in the park, and how you came over and kissed me at Pansy's when she went out of the room? You do too care! You're crazy about me—'most as dippy as I am about you. Honey girl! Haven't you taken it out of me enough for getting soused thus inopportunely? Isn't it about time to put the balm on the wounds and trot out the loving cup and start the kissing bee? I'm all ready!"

"Oh, Ferdinand Kendal, can't you un-

derstand *anything*?" She was pale, shaking, but angry enough now to speak forcefully. "Doesn't plain English convey any meaning to you? I'm *through* with you! Nothing you can say, no repentance, can change me or interest me. I hate to have you touch me. I shall always hate it. When I—those times you speak of— Oh, I didn't know you! I thought you were utterly different from what I've found you are. Can it give you any pleasure to kiss me when you know I'm hating it and you?"

"Well, since you ask me, and since you put it that way, it can." Kendal's face had altered. The wheedling, fatuous expression left it and a bullying shade fell across his features; his eyes and mouth looked suddenly sinister. "You're my wife, and a man can go as far as he likes with his wife. I'd like to know what you think you're going to do about it. You're coming to my hotel with me, right now."

Bianca was indeed going with him; she could not, try as she would, resist his strength; but she looked around her frantically and to her ineffable relief now saw Wantage in the distance, evidently searching for her. Her small, white figure, at a man's side, too, as he would not expect to find her, would be almost impossible to recognize from so far away, she thought, but she flung up her right arm in a desperate signal, and the gesture caught his eye. He gained on them with strides that became longer as he saw that it was indeed Bianca.

"I've been looking everywhere for you," he called reproachfully, when he had almost reached them. Kendal wheeled, and the girl, in the moment when Wantage's unexpected voice threw him off guard, wrenched her arm free and moved to the other man's side.

"What the hell are you butting in for?" asked the husband aggressively.

"Miss Jermyn—"

"Call her Mrs. Kendal! She's my wife."

"Mr. Kendal then—temporarily," Wantage drawled. He was conscious of a hot desire to choke the flyer, but for Bianca's sake put force on himself to maintain a smooth-surfaced manner. The taunting adverb, however, he could not resist. "She is my sister's guest, and you will admit my responsibility for her in a place like this."

"Admit nothing. She——"

"Elizabeth wants to go now." Wantage ignored Kendal suavely and said to Bianca, "Are you ready? You've seen enough, haven't you? It's quite time for tea!"

"Look here, who do you think you're talking to, anyway? She isn't going anywhere with you or your Elizabeth, if you've got any Elizabeth—I doubt it. She's my wife, and she's coming with me. You get to hell out of here, and don't mix where you aren't wanted!"

Kendal's face was working, his hands twitching nervously. Wantage turned again to Bianca.

"Would you mind going away a little, I wonder? Just walk back that way—I'll join you in a minute. That is—I'm not making a mistake about your wishes, am I? I haven't interrupted a—a reconciliation between you and Mr. Kendal?"

"Oh, *no!* I've told him I never want to see him again."

"Then, please?"

She walked away, heard Wantage utter a terse sentence in a voice she had never heard from him before, stopped and, fascinated, crept back a few steps toward the men who now saw only each other.

"The situation is clear to you now, is it? Do you want any further elucidation?"

"That's what's the matter with it, it's a damn' sight too clear! She's been living with——"

"With my sister since she left you. Don't say the other thing, if your health is of any importance to you. Take a look at me, Kendal. I may be fifteen years older than you, but I'm forty pounds heavier, at a conservative guess. If I have to start arguing with you with my fists, you'll have the same chance as a frog against the wheel of an auto truck."

Bianca listened, breathless, her pulses fluttering, her mouth dry and her eyes oddly bright. This was a new Wantage. His lazy, aloof personality seemed integrally altered, as if anger had fused its elements into something more closely knit, something keen and clean edged and flashing.

"Get this, you little rat, get it straight and don't forget it! The lady who made the great mistake of marrying you is not helpless—she has friends and she has money and she is in a free country. You had a chance you didn't deserve given to you—a chance to be her husband and try to live up to her, and you couldn't restrain your dirty appetites for twelve hours after you married her! You've lost, you're gone, and you have no second chance. You're a filthy, little rotter that ought never to have been allowed in the same room with her in the first place—anybody that looks at you can see your finish—dirt, drink, dope, d. t.'s, and damnation! You won't be even technically her husband much longer. She is starting a suit for divorce at once——"

"And do you and she think there won't be a counter suit——"

Wantage struck a crumpling blow full in the mouth that sent Kendal staggering back, and drew a cry from Bianca. He perceived her presence for the first time.

"Go away!" he said, annoyed.

"Oh, come, too!" she begged.

He waited a moment, giving Kendal the opportunity for reprisals if he should wish to make them; then, as the

other only lowered, spit blood and cursed from his distance, Wantage shrugged faintly and walked away at Bianca's side.

He was breathing deeply with the gratification of long-held rage given vent. Bianca, too, went silently. Perhaps no man of any personal attractiveness whatever, can show himself to her cleanly and thoroughly angry without at least doubling a woman's interest in him. Bianca was struggling with the conviction, suddenly born, that she was in love with Ned Wantage. His voice as he had spoken to Kendal, was ringing in her ears, his unexpected forcefulness and the splendid blaze of his anger made her tremble, but tremble pleasurably, to have him at her side, as one might exult half fearfully in the friendship of a tiger. She was set to revising all her estimates of him; she had thought him fatherly at first, and of late, brotherly—he seemed neither any longer.

She did not think once of Kendal as they walked slowly across the field to Mrs. Cary's side.

CHAPTER XV.

There was one thing to be thankful for, Wantage thought, as he spread out the extra and stared at the headlines he had read over so many times—that Bianca had not seen the crash.

She might so easily have seen it, and so have had the hideous picture to haunt her for the rest of her life. Kendal must have stopped only long enough to take the three or four stiff drinks to which his colleagues attributed the accident, before going up again, and the car could not have been five minutes headed away from the field before the plane had lurched, lost equilibrium through some inexplicable vagary of its pilot, and of a sudden dropped like a stone, from a height too low for recovery but quite great

enough to assure instant death for Kendal.

Others might talk of whisky and dissipated courses, but he and she, Wantage thought, must know his end for suicide. He was quite hard enough himself—the shock of learning of the man's violent death having past, the man he had struck and insulted ten minutes earlier—to feel that on the whole the riddance was good, that Kendal had lived of late to no important purpose and that his taking off solved Bianca's problems neatly. The thought that the fellow himself must have argued on the same lines cut a little, roused some half-remorseful, impatient pity. But it was the probable effect of his act upon Bianca that brought consternation.

He could not face the thought of her certain and cruel suffering, her self-reproach, and he felt a coward before the idea of her blame of himself. It would be impossible, he thought, for her to see Kendal as he had been, now that he was dead. He would become again for her the hero he had first appeared to her, his offense would be forgotten and she would probably devote her life to mourning and repentance.

He went up with the newspaper at last, and knocked at Beth's door. Mrs. Cary was just out of her bath, and sat before her dressing table in a blue silk kimono sprinkled with apple blossoms; she was rubbing cold cream into her face, but she permitted her brother's entrance.

"My dear boy, have you seen a ghost?" she cried as he came in.

"Something ghastly's happened," he muttered with a glance toward the wall beyond which was Bianca's room. He spread the newspaper for Beth to see.

"Oh! Kendal? Her husband? Good lord!" After a minute she said, as those unrelated to a tragedy's victim may permit themselves to say, "After all, he wasn't much good, was he? It's

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the best solution for her—and bound to come sooner or later!"

"There's more to it—— We met him, Beth, not an hour ago, on the field. He was frightening her, trying to get her to go back to him, when I came up and—if it were all to happen over again, I couldn't do differently! I told him where he got off, straight English, and that she'd sue for divorce. Then he—well, he threatened a counter suit."

"Oh! The—well, he's dead."

"I hit him. D'you blame me? I felt like battering him to death, and if he'd hit back, I probably would have. Punishment, you see, not a fight—he was only a shrimp, if you ever saw him. Still, it's a shock even to me to have this happen. And what will she feel! Look here, Beth, I can't face her."

Mrs. Cary looked at him thoughtfully, rolling her under lip between her teeth. "You were only protecting her. I don't see——"

"She must have cared for him once. She'll hate me."

"You never can tell how a girl will feel, of course——"

"She'll hate me. I'm going away—now, next train. You'll show her this and be good to her, won't you?"

"It's a nice finish to my little party! Of course, I'll be decent to her, Ned—she's a dear child, and don't fancy I'm blind! Shall I send for her mother?"

"Well—it can't do any harm now," he said dubiously. "Take her home first, though, please. You're a game sport, Beth, and I don't know where I'd be without you. I'm going now. Good-by!"

They shook hands, as she wasn't kissable, and Beth put all the reassurance possible into the clasp. She was less sure than her brother that Bianca must hate him for the afternoon's events, but absence, she reflected, if not overdone, is seldom harmful.

She finished her facial toilette hastily, and went with the folded newspaper to

the other room; it would be terrible if the girl had dressed and gone downstairs, to read those headlines alone, among strangers.

But Bianca was lying on her bed, one arm thrown up over her head, a book beside her, but her eyes on the sea horizon beyond the window. She was looking, Beth thought pityingly, unusually pretty. Either her bath or something else had set a soft little blaze of color in her cheeks, her eyes were liquidly languorous. Looking at her one appreciated without analyzing the indescribable happy harmony of being that has more to do with a woman's loveliness than coloring or feature or adornment.

"You poor child!" said Beth maternally, commiseratingly. "I have something dreadful to tell you. Can you be very brave——"

Bianca's eyes started wide. As she had said to Wantage the day before, the friends who were near her, had all traveled in the Cary's Packard, and of the well-being of these she felt assured. After a moment she recollected that she had a mother.

"No, it's not your mother. It's—Ferdinand Kendal. Ned told me you'd seen him—knew he was flying here. He—his machine fell—— It's in this newspaper—— I wouldn't look at it if I were you——"

"Ferdie! Oh!" The girl's hand flew to her mouth. "Is he—how badly——"

"Oh, at once——" Beth said hastily. "He was killed at once." Bianca lay straight and still, saying nothing, and she went on distractedly, inconsecutively, "You know if people *will* fly—— It's instantaneous; you lose consciousness while you're falling. He—you can always remember how brave he was, in the war and all—— It's terrible for you, dear, but——"

Killed, dropped out of the sky, dropped out of her life. Bianca drew a deep breath, and closed her eyes. She was indeed quite callous to the news that

Beth had brought her, and in no great need of consolation. Kendal had never been a man to her. He had been at first a girl's foolishly romantic dream, an affair of impalpable fragments after the rude waking, and to-day for half an hour a nightmare, from which Wantage had saved her. She had no such revulsion of feeling as he had feared, as, indeed, she would have experienced had she been older and more versed in the humanities. She did not even have, as Wantage himself had had, a sense of the tragedy in mortal things, in contemplation of the young spoiled life, ended and unregretted.

"I'll have your dinner sent up——" Beth was saying. "You'll try to eat something, won't you? We'll go home to-morrow—and I'm telegraphing your mother to come at once——"

CHAPTER XVI.

Crystal came for an actress's week-end, from Sunday morning until after breakfast Monday.

Beth had once seen her—going with sneering distaste to gauge the charms that had undone her brother—and had been forced to allow her some ebullient physical attractions, great verve and grace in dancing, and a powerful, true voice, not too sweet. Crystal in appropriate black, veiled and restrained of manner, seemed not the same woman.

"You have been very kind to my poor little girl!" she told Beth solemnly. "What a sad ending to her married life! Just a boy-and-girl quarrel it was that was keeping them apart—a lover's quarrel. Ferdie Kendal was a noble boy—I felt like a mother to him."

She wept with much refinement into a small handkerchief, one half of which was black border, and Mrs. Cary detested her.

Afterward, in seclusion with her widowed daughter, Crystal spoke otherwise, and cheerfully.

"That's the worst of airmen, and it's a mistake to let oneself get attached to 'em. They're all bound to go flop sooner or later. Still, I believe in looking on the bright side, and of course, Ferdie was a rotter. Getting a load on the day he married you! The idea! I was so provoked with him, I talked to him like a Dutch uncle. And women—oh, lord! Get Pansy to tell you some of her stories, any time you begin to feel you've had a loss in Ferdie."

"Oh, mother, he's dead—poor fellow. Please don't talk about him that way! I'd rather only remember the good things."

"They'll take some remembering, I'll say! Well, let's forget him, then. Now what about you, Bianca—what are your plans?"

"Oh, I haven't made any yet. I must, I know. Mrs. Cary's an angel, but I can't stay here forever."

"Have you got hold of any of your money yet?"

"Yes, it's in safe deposit in Baltimore—it was all war bonds, you know. It's much more than I need."

Crystal's eyes brightened at this remark, which seemed to lead naturally into her subject, the true reason for her prompt response to Beth's summons, and her unusual urbanity toward her daughter.

"That's just what I've thought myself!" she exclaimed cordially. "It's a lot of money, yet in a sense, of course, it isn't enough to live on. My dear, you have no idea what my expenses have been this winter. New York is positively worse than London—and that's saying a mouthful! My salary may sound big, but what's left of it after I've turned around looks like a peanut. Can you lend me some money? That wretched Juliette is actually suing me for her bill. I'm going to do some cinema films in the summer and I'll be rich then—I'll pay you back."

"Why, of course," said Bianca list-

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lessly. "How much do you want, mother?"

But she was astonished when Crystal said calmly, "Oh, about five thousand pounds. You have twenty thousand, haven't you? Well, you won't be *pinched*, then, if you lend me five."

"But mother—I only use the interest. If I lend you all that, I'll only get a hundred and fifty pounds next quarter, instead of two hundred! Of course I can spare it, but——"

"Well, I should think you could spare it, out of twenty thousand pounds! Of course, you won't keep to the interest, after you leave here—you'll find you'll want all sorts of things you can't get that way. I was just thinking how nice it would be for you to buy a really good car, that I could use when you didn't want it. And yet there must be a satisfaction about a steady income, however small." Crystal said wistfully. "I've never had a cent I haven't had to work for, myself. Many women get some sort of financial security with their husbands, but I have certainly had bad luck with husbands!"

Bianca scarcely heard her mother's babble; she was plunged in thought about her own concerns, Crystal's appearance having broken the lethargy in which she had till now rested.

"Of course, I can't stay here forever," she murmured.

"Well—scarcely! A priceless place for a rest cure, I'll say," Mrs. Carr's speech was always a bouquet of cosmopolitan flowers of slang, English, American, and even on occasion Australian, "but you're young and healthy, and might as well be enjoying life."

Bianca smiled wanly, for it was no thought of enjoyment elsewhere that made her restless here. But she had been installed at Fairacres by Ned Wantage, and felt herself in a manner under his protection while she stayed. This had been acceptable enough when she looked upon him as a fatherly friend

and knew herself a married woman; the situation now was at all points changed. The difference in age had become irrelevant, they were merely man and woman now, and she was free of any tie. She could not wait here for him to return to her, something obscure within her, scarcely recognized, prompted her to place herself on her own ground, to cause herself, if she were desired, to be pursued.

"Yes, I'll go—I'll go at once!" she said. "We might travel up together." For Beth, whose determined hospitality she knew, couldn't oppose her leaving under her mother's conveyance. And it was going to be hard enough to leave, without having to combat her kind pleadings.

At dinner that night Bianca looked for the first time as desolate and sad as might have been expected of a three days' widow. She drooped in her chair, gazed dully, smiled with effort when Beth smiled at her and begged her to eat. Crystal on the other hand was by now in high spirits; she had lost her first constraint in the presence of Ned's sister and had forgotten her stage-duchess manners.

Mr. Cary brightened under her influence and became more talkative than Bianca had yet seen him. He had taken Beth to that performance of "A Bit Over," and had always held, as men will when their brothers are censured by women, that there was much to be said for the delinquent's excuse. After dinner he and Crystal talked, smoked, and drank liqueurs with obvious enjoyment, while Bianca packed upstairs and Beth absented herself from time to time to give reluctant assistance.

CHAPTER XVII.

Absence from Bianca by no means tranquilized Wantage, who found now that the months of intimate companionship, under Beth's auspices, had

made him, in separation, a bereaved though unacknowledged lover. Thoughts of the girl were with him always, glimpses of her face, the thrilling touch of her hand, her laugh, her grace in movement. He had to imagine her unhappy, and in part through him.

When he heard from his sister that she had left Fairacres, and with whom, his discomfiture was complete. The return to Crystal seemed a renunciation of himself and his protection, and a declaration of loyalty to Kendal's memory. He, Ned Wantage, was now definitely thrust out of her life, and it was not likely that she would miss him greatly, a man twice her age, officious, blundering, brutal. Nevertheless, he watched the mails with hope which no disappointments could quite kill.

He had written to her before he knew of her move, a brief note which Beth duly forwarded to Crystal's care.

DEAR BIANCA: However you are inclined to feel toward me, will you try to remember that from first to last I tried to do what I thought was best for you? I cannot venture to offer you sympathy as your other friends may, but please believe that I also am feeling both grief and remorse.

Do not be afraid that I shall intrude on you until I receive word from you that I may. You understand, I believe, how very eagerly I shall be waiting for your forgiveness. Yours faithfully,

EDWARD WANTAGE.

Crystal shook the letter from a heap of communications for herself and stared resentfully at the familiar handwriting, black, nervous, with the wide-spaced letters that tell of big fingers on the pen, forming Bianca's name.

She had no sense of dishonor in opening the envelope. Through life her code had imposed scarcely a limitation upon her impulses, and she felt really curious now to know what Wantage had to say to Bianca, upon what terms the two really stood. Moreover, the girl was her daughter, and the man had been a property of hers for years. If she had

had to defend her action, she would have declared that she was quite within her rights in examining what was, by extension, her own.

She smiled contemptuously over Ned's formal phrasing, his exaggerated respect for that negligible young person, Bianca. "How very eagerly I shall be waiting for your forgiveness—" she reread thoughtfully. Why, here was her chance to "get back at him" for his disloyalty to herself!

"He can take it out in waiting, then!" she said, tore the letter in eight pieces and dropped them into a waste-paper basket. She had half forgotten the incident by the next day. Bianca naturally did not speak to her of Wantage, and he did not present himself in the circles she frequented. He dropped out of her mind, superseded by fresher interests.

She had been amiable enough about taking Bianca with her to New York. It behooved her to be conciliatory in face of the loan, not yet consummated, although promised. After all, a daughter in the first weeks of her widowhood, exasperatingly fresh and pretty though she might be, could not be seriously detrimental because she would never be in evidence. "A Bit Over" had only another month or two to run, and at its close she would break up her present ménage.

The apartment in Central Park West accordingly opened its arms in surface welcome to Bianca; she entered it reluctantly for the ugly memory of her practical ejection thence on her wedding night. Hers was a small room at the back, facing upon the backs of other houses, an outlook about as inspiring, she thought, as her own immediate one. She had glorious hopes in prospect, but for the present, only association with her mother, insincerely cordial over feelings once unforgettably shown in all frankness, and her mother's acquaintances.

It appeared from the gossip about these people to which Bianca was constantly treated, that there was among them a quite extraordinary amount of illicit passion, indiscretion, and indulgence on the part of the injured partner. "Mabel knows it won't last, so she should worry," Crystal would say, or, "He knows she has the goods on him about Anita, so he has no comeback!"

They were the only companions offered to her, and Bianca had enjoyed their energetic gayety and varied diversions well enough, before she had met Beth Cary and her friends, before the developments of her own life had sobered her. Now she was profoundly afflicted at the prospect of meeting them again, and relieved to remember that her widowhood would make it unnecessary for as long as she liked to hug her mourning, to which however she felt that she had little right. Certainly she did not mourn poor Kendal, who had been to her no more than an importunate and rejected lover; and the days she had spent in Beth's house, when she had kept to her room and had been understood to be weeping for her husband, had really been spent in going over and over each least incident of her friendship with Wantage, in confirming her happy certainty that she loved him and in coming to that other certainty, that he must love her, with exultation that seemed almost shameful, almost dishonest at such a time.

He was conventional, she knew. He would treat her, for months and perhaps for the full year, with the delicate respect he had shown her since her marriage. But he would come to see her in New York, she confidently expected, looking to a resumption presently of the interrupted companionship that would be all the more satisfying, she thought guiltily, because Beth, dear and sweet as she was, would not be there to make a third. They would go out to dinner together, to quiet out-of-the-way places,

and perhaps he would remember how fond she was of sailing, and take her sometimes for a day on the Sound. Perhaps, after all, it need not be so long before they would reach, at least, a secret understanding.

But the days and the weeks passed, and she had no sign from him. She found herself entering that period of unhappy perplexity when a woman is uncertain whether she is deliberately neglected, or if mischance or scruple have interfered; when she calls upon her pride in one hour and in the next visions him unhappier than herself and softens miserably. Bianca, leading a surface life of monotonous and elaborate idleness, broken by visits of condolence from such women as were on informal terms with her mother, was inwardly going through a cycle of anxiety, doubt, resentment, and remorseful faith again.

Pansy, in particular, greeted her with exuberant sympathy and effusion. "You poor lamb!" she cried with kisses. "A widow at nineteen! It's heart-rending, that's what it is. But it's a consolation to remember how the men do love a widow. You'll marry again, and better than you did before, let's hope! Ferdie was a good loss, poor boy, though I see you don't think so—you're taking it hard, aren't you? You don't look well to me."

She was not well, and as the passing months seemed to erect Wantage's indifference into an indisputable certainty, she became paler, alternating between utter lassitude and nervous energy. It was in the latter mood that she one day, in desperation, went to Pansy and begged for introductions, for suggestions, for help in finding occupation of some kind.

"One must *do* something, or go mad! You can't think how deadly my life is. You suggested once that I might go into cinema work—do you remember?

Is it very hard? And how does one go about it?"

"You're not well enough to think about work yet, child," said Mrs. Sloan anxiously. "You ought to be in bed this minute, you look feverish to me. Pictures mean the hardest kind of work part of the time, and then long stretches when you've nothing to do—you'd find it'd get on your nerves more than 'resting' in New York, where at least there's plenty doing in the amusement line. You're liable to get stuck in the most God-forsaken places. Of course, there's good fun on the side sometimes, and there'd generally be a nice bunch of boys along, to play around with. You might do worse. But you ought to build yourself up physically before you try to make a start. Don't your head ache right now?"

Bianca had been brought up to lie about her headaches, but Pansy's penetration was too kind to be balked of its triumph.

"I can always tell. Say! I'm going to take your temperature. I'll bet it's up, and if it is, you're going to stay right here and go to bed!"

The thermometer recorded a hundred and two, and Bianca, feeling much ashamed of the trouble she was giving, had to submit presently to being put to bed, between lace-trimmed sheets and under a satin coverlet of a strawberry pink. The room was full of mirrors and haphazard perfumes; she had to breathe through her mouth in order not to be suffocated, to close her eyes to avoid seeing a dozen pale Biancas with fine-spun dark hair that kept catching in Pansy's ubiquitous Irish lace.

It was nothing more romantic than a light attack of influenza, doubtless made worse by depression of spirits, that ailed her, and she and Crystal perhaps rejoiced equally that it should occur under Mrs. Sloan's roof. Pansy was cheerfully solicitous and flatteringly attentive; she opened her windows

at the doctor's suggestion and produced plain bed linen. In time she had the girl up again, and ensconced her upon a day bed in what after the manner of the seventies, she still called her *boudoir*.

Bianca's negligee was a quaint garment of putty-colored *crêpe de Chine*, embroidered over every inch with tiny silk flowers. Pansy's maid had plaited her dark hair into two broad flat braids, and the cushion behind her head was a happy coral-pink.

"It's a crime there should be only women to look at you," said Mrs. Sloan energetically, as she surveyed the effect. She was going shopping herself, having foregone her favorite pursuit for nearly a week in Bianca's interest.

"You're sure you don't mind being left alone? It will be slow for you while I'm gone, I'm afraid. I'll tell Maggie to show anybody that calls right in here. Of course nobody much is likely to come, at this time of day. I'll be back by two or three if I can. 'By!'"

She went, leaving peace and grateful quietude behind her. Bianca had a passably interesting book, and the change from the other room was pleasant. She read with serene eyelids, forgetting Pansy's threat of callers. It was not until she heard simultaneously Maggie's, "Will you go right up, sir—" and a man's step mounting the stairs, that she remembered it, and the house's informal ways.

It was Wantage who stood in the doorway.

"Oh! How d'you do——"

"I beg your pardon," he said gravely. "I had no idea you were here." His eyes feasted on the picture she made. "Have you been ill?"

"Just a touch of 'flu.' Nothing really." The sight of him shook her, she trembled under her soft draperies.

"You want me to go away, I suppose," he said strangely. She wanted, and didn't want it, and she said

in a voice she made almost strident lest it betray her by tremulousness,

"It's Pansy's house. I can't send away her guests, can I?"

"I can see Pansy some other time—some other place. I only came to inquire about you. You've made your feeling pretty plain—and it's understandable enough."

He was thinking bitterly that though he was well quit of his half gods of old, he had not known how to convince this child of his sincerity.

"Yes, I think it is understandable!" said Bianca harshly. Her great eyes stared past him, hot with the memory of all the aching days when he might have come to her, and had left her without a sign.

He thought she meant to charge him with Kendal's death, and repeated miserably some phrases from his letter. "I acted from first to last as I thought best for you. How could anybody dream— If that hadn't happened, I don't believe you yourself would ever think I behaved wrongly. Perhaps that's a thing I ought not to say. Perhaps I ought simply to keep away."

"Indeed I think you might as well—*now!*" said Bianca.

"I wonder whether you've guessed at all how much I cared——"

"Cared!"

"I shall never see you again, unless it's by accident—I might as well say it now. Bianca, you're punishing me far too cruelly, for what, if you'd only look at it fairly, was a misfortune much

more than a fault. You're not very old, and when you're older I hope you'll be more tolerant. It wouldn't be pleasant for me to know that a total stranger blamed me for her husband's death, and you knew, you knew well enough, that I—cared. If I had killed Kendal outright, purposely, instead of merely shaking his nerve before he took the air for the last time—do you think I haven't paid for it in these countless days when I've waited for a word from you, a message through Beth, anything in answer to my letter?"

"Your letter!" she cried, with anger to match his. "Why, there never *was* a letter! You talking about waiting for days, I've waited *thousands* of days. How could I think you cared, when you never wrote or came?"

It was Wantage who was shaking now. Knowing Crystal as he did, he guessed instantly that she had destroyed his letter. "I wrote—two days after it happened. I said I'd never come near you, bother you in any way—till you forgave me; said I might come. Bianca, does this mean—can you forgive me?"

"What for?" she asked vaguely. She had reached her arms straight up and was pulling his willing head down to hers.

"About Kendal, of course. Cursing him—hitting him—that day——"

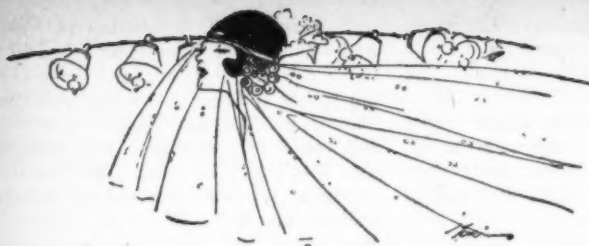
"Oh, that. One is sorry—poor Ferdie! But—you know, I think that was when I first fell in love with you. You're awfully sweet when you're angry!"



YOUNG LOVE

YOUR arm about me thrown
Is careless as spring's own;
Life's water turns to wine
At your gay word and mine.
Who said that love must be
A thing of agony?

MARY CAROLYN DAVIES.



Bait

By
Elizabeth
Newport
Hepburn

Author of
"The Pride of Galatea,"
"The Greater Drama," etc.

WALKING up the Avenue, safe, whole, victorious, he suddenly found himself caught in a black cloud of depression more horrible than any experience of trench, battle, or hospital. He felt friendless, homeless, without incentive or objective. And then, mercifully, the black gloom was lightened—by a woman's smile.

She stepped from a side street into the swirl of the Avenue, and despite enveloping furs he recognized the long lines of her figure, delicate yet distinctive, the contours of a lovely oval face framed by fair hair under a velvet hat brim. It was Cecile Voorhees, whom he seemed to have known not very well and in what must surely have been a previous incarnation. But she had stopped, was holding out her hand.

"Captain Rand! Only for an instant I wasn't sure. I missed your uniform!"

"I miss it myself," said Tony fervently, as he shook the firm slender hand, and then fell into step beside her. "This is the first time I've worn civilian clothes since before Plattsburg, and I feel like a forlorn Angora cat that some ruthless brute has clipped in mid-winter!"

He thought her smile rather wonderful, then told himself, beneath all the surface layers of social decorum, that he was an impressionable ass! And he recalled a conversation with a brother officer in France, in that prehistoric time before the armistice. Jerry Dunlap had

said: "You know, Tony, we've got to go slow when we first get back to the States—we who are unprotected by the holy bonds of matrimony. Seeing women again, our home girls, will go to our heads like champagne on an empty tummy! So I'm taking for a watchword: 'Remember that you can't marry but one at a time.'"

He came back to Cecile Voorhees, who was saying: "But, then, *you* are specially fortunate!"

"Yes," said Rand. "I've both my eyes, and between being gassed and wounded, it was a close call. And I've seen some of the other poor chaps. So I'm thankful, the Lord knows! And yet——"

"Oh," she cried, "I didn't mean *that*!" For an instant her glance fell upon that indelible scar on his forehead—a glance he knew well. He had seen it in the eyes of many women, a look compounded of pity, gratitude, pride. Then her words came quickly:

"I mean so many men come home and find that they must start life all over again. But you have your art, the work you've already accomplished. Why, at Macbeth's there's a portrait of yours on exhibition now. Come and see for yourself!"

Anthony felt absurdly excited, felt his face burning.

"I didn't know," he said. "Yes, I'd love to see it! Over there all forms of art seemed so improbable, so trivial. My studio has been subrented, so, though I'm in possession, none of my

work is there. I've been wondering whether I ever really did paint anybody!"

Within three minutes they were in a large room with beautiful dim walls. There were perhaps a dozen paintings, attractively hung, well spaced—it was an exhibition of recent portraits by American painters—and Anthony saw his own version of the woman beside him, a high-keyed, luminous thing, simple, vigorous.

Miss Voorhees discussed it as impersonally as though neither painter nor sitter were known to her.

"I hate modern portraits, usually. Yet this I care for very much. And I heard an artist talking about it, a man you'd know. He was with Mr. Menteith, the collector. He said: 'Look at his brushwork, his color, the way that orange scarf registers, without detracting from the face. He strikes a modern note, and yet his portraits aren't mere collections of Futurist features, flung together at random. He has technique and vision, both.'"

Tony smiled in rather a dazed fashion at this kind young woman who spoke with a tact and intelligence which men do not ask of beauty.

"Miss Voorhees, when I met you, I was down in a black pit. And you've been a sort of angel-derrick, yanking me up into the daylight. Now I could challenge the shade of Velasquez himself! How on earth am I to thank you enough?"

"Thank that before-the-war Anthony Rand. He did things worth coming home to, even from France. With all that experience to quicken the imagination, deepen personality, what *can't* you do?"

She said it impressively, and she looked extraordinarily beautiful. Tony felt a thrill from the scar between his eyes down to his very toes. As always, when he was happy he wanted to laugh at the whimsical whirligig called Life.

A few weeks back, a French hospital—before that, the confusion and grime of hell in Flanders—now an art gallery, and a woman, such a woman!

He walked home with her, serious, appreciative, as her mood seemed to demand. And deep within he was clutching joyously at that old, beloved, many-hued fabric, that stuff o' dreams which is to the artist what bread is to the starving, light to the blind, the face of the beloved to the eyes of the lover! His fingers began to itch for the smooth curve of his palette, he wanted to paint; the keenness of this desire almost blotted from his consciousness even the woman at his side.

Nevertheless, he saw her frequently during the next few months. He had met her originally through Judith Hunt, perhaps his most intimate friend in New York. And Judy he had known ever since the old Art League days, when they had criticized each other's technique, learned from each other's blunders. He went to see her that evening, to hear all her news, feel the warm glow of their tested comradeship, and talk about himself—and Cecile.

"She showed me that war hasn't permanently altered values," he announced in the manner of a discoverer. "And she even talked about my painting her 'little brother,' aged eighteen. At this stage, a portrait commission would be a gift from the gods, after I've gotten my hand in. I suppose if I'd even done camouflage, I shouldn't feel so hopelessly out of touch. You see, the army machine, bucking the Hun, isn't conducive to a man's taking art seriously! But that blessed girl showed me that I'm really back in the good old game! May the Lord bless her for her charity!"

Judy Hunt was tall and gray-eyed, with red in her hair, and a sprinkling of atomic freckles upon her little tilted nose. She gave Tony a shrewd glance, then smiled at his serious face.

"He will, Tony. For she's quite the most unspoiled beauty in this demoralizing town. If she had no looks and no plutocratic father and no social position, she couldn't be more truly democratic—or more appreciative of genius and virtue—meaning you and me! She comes to my studio, admires my etchings, and eats my Sunday morning popovers exactly as she'd go to the palace of all the Cæsars, or warm herself by the hearth fire of Kipling or Wells or John Sargent—if she happened to know and like them! For she not only isn't a social snob, but she escapes the subtler snobbery of the newly cultured, the *flair* for great names!"

"All that, and heavenly to look at! Why, Judy, over there in the trenches I'd forgotten how beautiful a woman can be, the sheer joy of color and grace. The thing I painted of her two years ago she's utterly outgrown, yet I'm not up to painting her again; not now. I'd like to paint men, an occasional child, for the next year, and just look at women, drink in their loveliness without incurring artistic obligations. And then—oh, when I get back my conceit and my technical facility, I'll show 'em!"

Judy smiled. "Your 'conceit' seems fairly normal even now! But, of course, I understand—it must seem rather a long pump, from the hell of war to the heaven of a face like Cecile's! And Berton Gray was saying only yesterday, that if you paint people as you can—'with no camouflage or compromise with Mammon,' you may do for portrait painting what Leonard Merrick has done for letters. They call him 'the novelists' novelist'—according to Berton, you may become 'the painters' painter!'"

Tony flushed boyishly, his blue eyes looked black, as they did when he was pleased, angry, or happy. "From Gray that's some 'tribute,' Judy Hunt. He's the only art critic in this town for

whose opinion I care a tinker's dam! But Merrick—member how we revelled in 'Conrad' years ago? —hasn't he sailed pretty close to the wind—just missed joining the bread line, in fact?"

"I've heard so," said Judith. "I've also heard that the pleasure of his recent success has been badly blurred by his wife's death. It seems she shared all the hard times, and missed the great hour of recognition! Which brings us back to Kipling's forlorn 'He travels the fastest who travels alone!'"

"That explains me," said Tony cheerfully. "Does it also account for the fact that you and Berton are still playing safe, Judy?"

Color drifted across her face, for Judy still blushed in a childish fashion which she hated and her friends loved. But her tone was level, and even a little lazy.

"Possibly. Or it may be lack of enterprise. Or again—" She hesitated, and Tony broke in:

"Don't hedge, Judy. What's the use of a prehistoric pal, if you don't use him now and then as general referee and confidant?"

Judith's eyes filled, and her strong chin trembled. "Caring hurts so, Tony! Perhaps if Kit were back, I shouldn't be a coward. He's all right of course, but one gets tired of waiting. And I've had no news since a month before the armistice."

Kit was Judith's only brother, indeed the only surviving member of her family, if he still lived. He had gone to France with an engineer corps, and Tony, who had known him well, longed now to say some cheerful banal thing about Kit's being the lucky kind. But he had seen so many boys die, that he could no longer grip the old gay optimism to which this war had given the lie. So he patted her shoulder and held his peace, and Judy said presently:

"Anyway, it's good to have you back, Tony, and in your own clothes again!"

"I rather fancied myself in khaki—perhaps because all women seem to like it!"

"When their own men aren't involved! And it's becoming enough, but nevertheless I prefer clothes not suggestive of cannon and cooties and Huns. I hate khaki!"

"And you such a patriot! Why, Judy, your letters put stiffening into me when I was nothing but soggy pulp. Letters like those you've written me and Kit have helped win the war!"

If she still wore that hurt look which dimmed her youth, there was gratitude in the glance she gave Tony. To reward him, she began again to talk of Cecile.

It was perhaps six weeks later that a little group of people were gathered in Tony's studio. There were Judy and Cecile of course, Tony himself, with the rested look of the artist who has come back to his own work for which he has been hungering, Berton Gray, and Cecile's distant cousin, Algernon Turner.

Gray was older than the others, a lean, dark-eyed man in the forties, with hair like a black-and-silver cloud. He always reminded Tony of a charcoal portrait of Paderewski. As an art critic he had attained real distinction. As he had also written several novels which had achieved a fair degree of success, he had in a measure satisfied the yearning of the critic who desires to create as well as to appreciate; and even artists themselves approved his economy of adjectives, his discrimination and real feeling for distinctness and beauty.

Turner, although a prosperous broker, was also something of a collector and connoisseur. It was he, keen of eye and ready of speech, who characterized Tony's latest portrait.

"The spirit of youth—painted by one who has seen youth betrayed. How

you've managed it, Rand, I don't see, but you've conveyed a sense of danger, as though you'd painted a sleeping baby, with a dagger lying on its pillow."

The artist smiled, well pleased. "Look at the background, the shadow against which the head is modeled——"

It was Judith who said slowly: "The shadow of a Prussian helmet! It ought to be cheap, grotesque, Tony. And it's the finest thing you've done!"

Cecile, lovely in a drooping hat and fur-trimmed frock, touched the canvas with her hand. Her eyes were very bright. "How stupid of me not to see. Alan was eighteen the day of the peace celebration, and I remember telling Mr. Rand."

"Yes," said Tony, looking at her, "you gave me the idea. To me, he stands for gay, irresponsible boyhood, before Armageddon!"

Suddenly, they were all conscious of Judy's black frock. Cecile went close, slipped an arm around her waist, without a word. For the news had come; Christopher Hunt had been killed on the very day of the signing of the armistice. But Judy smiled at them, held her head proudly with that obstinate lift of her firm chin which Tony remembered of old. She had worn that look, hurt, yet almost fiercely brave, ten years ago, when one of the painters who criticized the students' work, had shattered Judy's pride in her drawing by one damning word.

Tony was cleaning a disreputable palette in Judy's studio a week later, while Judy rested and watched him. He had scolded her for overworking, told her about a child he was painting, and now he had returned to his text, Cecile!

"She's a wonder, Judy! It's not merely the tangible help which this portrait has meant, though the check is a life-saver, God knows! But her faith in my ability, that's the miracle! She

has inoculated me with courage to take any risks, demand big prices, ignore the possibility of failure. I owe her a debt I can never pay!"

"Oh, I don't know," said Judy. "After all, there's one coin which pays for anything."

"What coin?" asked Anthony, innocently.

"The gold of love, Tony!"

Tony Rand stopped scraping the palette, and stared at this friend of his. The painful color suffused his face. He looked as embarrassed as a child, having that masculine dread of catching some vague and dim idea, some thought hardly defined as thought, in the brutal net of language!

Judy suppressed a smile, and said in an impersonal tone:

"I know how any man hates to put into words the things he knows—about a woman. He'd rather storm an enemy trench any day. But just let me say a few things, and if you don't like them, you can promptly forget them."

Rand was scraping the palette with furious energy. "Fire away, then."

Judy dipped her chin into cupping hands and stared into the night. Strange lights winked in a tall, black building opposite, then disappeared, an effect produced by an enormous electric sign, invisible from the corner of the studio where they sat. One moment the windows were burning glasses, then this brilliance died, and the great pile was sinister and grim, jet black against a pale sky.

Into Judy's eyes and voice there crept a hint of a like mystery, the mystery of a city at night, and of that other mystery we call sex, which makes any friendship between a man and a woman an incalculable element. She spoke slowly, half dreamily:

"It's queer, Tony, how each of us has his own special brand of courage and cowardice—some inner fear which others never guess. For instance, I've

never feared poverty or physical pain, or death, even. But deep in me, there's a thread of sheer terror when any one speaks the word 'blind.' All my life it's been there, and I've tried to pull it out, as one pulls out an ugly basting thread. But I can't! And the word that haunts you, Tony, is the word 'trap.' Before you went to France, you said you hoped when your time came you'd die in the open—not in the hold of a ship or in a ditch, face down. Perhaps this secret fear has hampered you, made you avoid any step which might lead you into another sort of 'trap.' Perhaps that's why you've always been wary of marriage!"

She paused, but the palette-scraping went on.

"I say this, Tony, because sometimes I'm afraid you may spoil your chance of success, happiness. You're doing strong work, you're on the road to somewhere, if you just take the right turn."

"And that turn?"

She laughed, a teasing yet a tender laugh, with a hint of mockery and of that impish clairvoyance of hers.

"Cecile Voorhees is beautiful, lovable—and proud! She has power in her hands, power such as men covet—not only fortune hunters, but real men—men no more afraid of her money than of her beauty. There's Algy Turner. He is big enough to recognize talent wherever he sees it, he is not ungenerous. But he doesn't like you!"

"Why not? What have I done to him?"

"You're in his way, stupid! And this is true without any conscious effort on your part, for you haven't even discovered what you want. Cecile sees this. So does Turner. And I suppose your passiveness, your unconsciousness of even playing in the game, adds to your value in their eyes! Yet Cecile is a person of dignity, not the woman to

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do her own courting. Why should she, when she has so much more than most women? And her husband, given character, initiative, will not be hampered by the fact that originally she held the purse strings. She'll make him and every one else forget it!"

Anthony, caught off his guard, said warmly:

"You're right there. She has nothing small or calculating about her. Any child could see that."

"Exactly! Already you've thought more about her, analyzed her more carefully, than any woman you've met in years! Ah, Tony, they are waiting for you—success, beauty, love! If only you're not so stupid and blind that you hesitate too long."

"By which you mean——"

"I've said it—quite all I meant to say. And I hope you aren't sorry you let me?"

He laid down the beautifully clean palette, wiped his hands on a disreputable paint rag, and then on a blameless handkerchief, crossing the space between him and Judy just as the clock began striking eleven.

"You may say anything you like, now and always. And perhaps—well, what you say, especially of Turner, is interesting! He would be no mean—rival."

She stood up, and gave him her hands for good night. In her little black gown, cut away at the throat and with transparent sleeves, she seemed paler than usual, yet about her was still that something which suggested open country, clean winds, woodsy perfumes. Always, when she entered a room she seemed to bring whiffs of freshness. Anthony was conscious of this now, conscious of what she had meant to him for so many years. He held her hands in his.

"You're the best friend a man ever had, Judy! And I want you to know that I'm grateful for the old days, the

way you've cared for my work, and for those brave letters!"

He was close to her and he kissed her, very simply and frankly. Judy laughed, and brushed the kiss from her lips with a playful gesture. "Save those, Tony, for her! And good luck, my dear, in work—and love!"

Afterward, Tony remembered the smiling kindness of her eyes, wondering vaguely whether Berton Gray had ever kissed her, decided that he had not. Berton certainly cared for her, but Judy cared too much for her work—those little etchings she did so beautifully, even for the long hours of teaching which earned her bread and butter. One never knew, of course, but he thought Judy was not the marrying kind of girl. But she had a distinct genius for friendship.

He found himself in the library of the Voorhees house the next day, waiting for Cecile, asking himself whether this would prove the crucial interview. He felt distinctly nervous, and with an effort forced himself to a consideration of the concrete evidences of success which surrounded him. Dull, soft leather, a priceless Chinese rug, fine old tapestries, some bits of pottery of a related, exquisite blue, which toned in with the many books, colorful as gems caught in little pools of light.

Presently, the place was soothing him like some subtle narcotic. He felt responsive to the beauty which clever people, aided by trained specialists, had known how to evoke from the magic of their gold. The artist in him saw backgrounds for pictures, choosing and rejecting at the behest of some imp living in the back of his head, an imp who always knew whether an object were really paintable or merely alluring, suggestive. Yet even as he reveled in all these mellow harmonies, he found himself planning a great bare studio, in no way silken or soft, with no litter of useless and expensive things such

as one saw, and hated, in the studios of other men, men often more able to collect than to create. And as he planned this great, beautiful, working place, he had a conquering sense of life simplified, dignified.

There was a rustle of silken skirts, the tap-tap of heels on a polished floor, then she entered the room and Tony caught his breath.

He had painted her, but not as she looked now. She wore her silver-blond hair high, fastened with a jeweled comb which caught the light, and her daffodil-yellow gown had the sheen of satin and the lustre of flower petals. The velvet dark of her eyes and the blackness of brows and lashes, together with the warm color in her cheeks, added the needed note of contrast. Tony Rand was conscious of a primitive impulse, he wanted to seize this lovely vision, and crush it against his breast. Actually, he stood there, dumb, staring at her with clear blue eyes; and it was she who spoke first.

"I didn't know you were in here, Tony. Evidently John has promoted you—the library is for real friends."

It was the first time she had called him by his name; Anthony found himself holding the long sash which floated from her gown.

"This frock— Cecile, do you know how beautiful you are, the sheer wonder of you!"

They stood still, looking at each other. Then Cecile smiled. Tony remembered what Judy had said: "They're waiting for you, success, beauty, love." Yet no words came to him, and he found himself foolishly caressing the silken thing he held.

To men and women vividly alive, there come, now and then, supreme moments—moments of emotion unconfessed, unforeseen, unforgettable. Such a moment came now to these two. What Cecile wanted as she wanted few things in her luxurious, petted exist-

ence, was to take one step farther, into the circle of Tony's arms. And Tony was conscious of the fragrant loveliness almost within his grasp, conscious too, suddenly, of an inexplicable emotion, something like stage fright, or like the sudden cramp which may attack the strongest swimmer.

True, his every sense was acutely aware of this woman's charm, and of loveliness tangible and appealing. He wanted to kiss her as he was sure she had never been kissed before, as indeed Tony himself had kissed no woman! More, his mind perceived the outstretched hand of opportunity, his chance to win the great game without compromise or delay. Yet, as by a flash of lightning, he saw that if he yielded, he would be yielding to the lure of passion, beauty, fortune. But that virile, clean, honest love that endures all tests, the test of time and distance and difficult life, such love was not in him.

When he spoke, it was in a low voice, almost stammeringly:

"Cecile, I came to tell you something—now, I see that my coming was a mistake—I'm sorry!"

There was a question in her eyes, then understanding. But she said quickly, so low that he hardly caught the words:

"Am I then so disappointing?"

The temptation he had resisted caught him now—he was conscious of warmth, fragrance, youth; these he held close, almost fiercely, kissing lips which kissed him in return. Yet all the while, the experience was like some dream, impersonal, unrelated to the deeper things within his life. She was lovelier than he had realized, fit mate for artist and man. She could give him the leisure and security he craved, the chance to work, dream, plan, ultimately attain. And he could accept none of her gifts.

When finally he released her, he could only repeat:

"I'm sorry—horribly sorry! I'm a blamed cad."

She said at last, slowly yet with decision:

"You needn't apologize, Tony. It wasn't all your fault—and you aren't a cad. And, well, I'm glad it happened, that I know what it's like, what I'm capable of feeling—there shan't be any wrong man—if I can't have the best, feel it, inspire it, why, then I'll keep my freedom!"

He stared at her dumbly, ashamed he could not love a thing so lovely, hating himself. She read that look, and when she spoke, all the smooth cadences of her voice were roughened, blurred. To Tony, she had never before been quite real.

"You're not to bother about me, Tony, nor blame yourself! All my life I've been spoiled, given anything I cried for or even fancied, for a moment. In the end I shall be stronger, finer, more able to understand other people, life, *because of you*. I am even proud—of caring for the best I've known, without counting the cost! For you are that, Tony. You have power, sincerity, talent. And in the end, you'll win all I had hoped to help you win!"

That hurt Tony most, and he said: "You've helped already, Cecile, more than you know!"

At this she smiled, a little, gallant smile, and looked at him with wet, shining eyes. Then, in some magical fashion she melted from the room. Three minutes later, he was feeling that he must have dreamed the whole scene, or watched it on the stage.

As he climbed the stair in his shabby studio building, he felt curiously old and battered. He had done the decent thing—what he had been in honor bound to do—and he had

lost his chance, irretrievably! For, how horribly crowded the world already was with penniless, unrecognized persons, possessed of a little talent and almost nothing else!

As he hunted for his latchkey, voices caught his ear, then the open door revealed visitors, Judith and Berton Gray. They were in a corner, very close together, peering at canvasses lined up against the wall. They had placed upon an easel the last thing he had painted, the full-length portrait of a child, against an old tapestry figured with dragons of tarnished gold on a deep-blue ground, the child's face dreaming, vivid, very fresh in color. And then, as Tony entered, Judith cried:

"We're burglars, Tony. I wheedled the janitor into letting me in, and he remembered me. Berton wants a portrait for the little show at the Wylie galleries."

For perhaps the first time in his life, Tony was conscious of a sharp thrust of envy. These two had looked so happy, so companionable and content. And he was feeling so damnably depressed—out of that flowing current upon which they were happily afloat. Also, he saw what he had seen before, without analyzing it, that Berton always looked younger, more vitally alive, more attractive, when he was with Judy. But Berton was speaking to him in that hearty, generous fashion of his, when he happened on some picture which he liked:

"This is bully good stuff, Tony. I hope you'll let us have it for the show."

Tony assented without any special enthusiasm, and Judy said that she had brought crumpets for tea, and with his permission would play hostess. As she moved toward the kitchenette, she flung Berton a look which seemed to Tony distinctively intimate and possessive. He heard her murmur: "Tell him now, Berton."

The two men sat down near the great

windows and smoked, Tony waiting to be told—just what, he did not care to fancy. And presently, Berton was talking of an old man he had recently met, a man who knew the world of art as the successful actor knows Broadway, a man with discriminating taste and sound judgment.

"And he saw your portrait of young Voorhees at the academy, Rand. It won him completely, and he asked me if I could arrange for you to paint a portrait of his son, a wounded aviator just back from Flanders. I believe you'd find him interesting, really paintable!"

"I may some day arrive at a point where a commission to paint a portrait won't tingle through me like strong drink, Gray!" said Tony. "But I'm not there yet. Of course I'll paint the boy—and thank you!"

Judy came out from behind the screen, a toasting fork in her hand, her cheeks flushed. In her black frock, with her widow's peak of burned sienna hair, and her thin, vivid face, she might have posed for one of the Muses, a modern whimsical Muse with a hint of humor lighting her poignant, passionate youth.

"Guess who this man is, Tony."

Berton Gray went to help her with the tea table, and Tony "guessed" automatically, a queer dislike of this man whom he had heartily admired for years, blurring all his pleasure in the little homely scene. Then Judy tilted her chin and spoke a name famous from New York to San Francisco, a name famous in the world of finance, and equally known to artists everywhere. Tony gave a shrill whistle of astonishment and Judy a satisfied sigh.

"If you paint that portrait *right*, Tony, it will mean recognition!"

Half an hour later, Gray had departed, but Judy was still in the big chair near the window. She had an

engagement to dine with Berton, but he had gone to interview an artist about some recent work, and so she and Tony had an hour alone. As she lay back, watching the lights which had begun to wink and beckon in the dusk, Tony saw that her color had faded, that there were little hollows and depressions in her cheeks that he had never seen before. He said sharply: "Judy, why will you overdo, this way? You're worn to a frazzle. Instead of dining out, you ought to go to bed, get some sleep. Cut out Berton's party for to-night."

She shook her head. "It's not a party, and Berton will give me a 'nourishing' beefsteak and get me home by nine o'clock. It's not Berton or late hours, but just life that's the matter with me—and death."

Tony was silent and presently she said: "But you, Tony, why aren't you happy, quite happy? Or are you?"

He was smoking a prewar relic, a battered, redolent pipe.

"Well, I've just seen Cecile—in a frock like a Rosetti sonnet."

Judy's head went up like that of an eager hound that has scented a lost trail.

"Have you asked her, Tony? Is it settled?"

"I have not asked her, yet it is settled."

"What do you mean? Not that she did the asking?"

"Would I tell you if she had? And when you consider Cecile, the ingrain pride of her, does it seem probable?"

"Of course she wouldn't. But tell me what happened."

He smoked for a long moment, without speaking. But he was watching her face, the color which had come back, the eager eyes under the bright hair. At last she made a little gesture with her eloquent artist's hand:

"Oh, don't tease me, Tony. I'm tired. Tell me."

Abruptly he came over to her chair, and with one possessive gesture had her in his arms.

"Tony!" It was a sharp, amazed cry. Then came quick words: "Tony, I'm engaged to Berton——"

"For dinner, yes. But not for life. As a liar you're a colossal failure—but what I want to know is why did you do it, send me to make a fool of myself—*when you knew!* For you did know—that nothing could have kept us apart, not my stupidity, my blindness, my poverty——"

"That's why, Tony!" It came sharply, a cry of pain.

"What do you mean?"

She freed herself, leaned back, and looked up at him.

"The 'trap' I wanted to save you from—poverty! A cruel trap that shuts down on so many able, gifted men, full of ambition, promise! Oh, I did mean you to escape! For you gave up the work you loved when you weren't drafted, risked everything, danger, the black ugliness of war—and to the artist that is the worst thing about it—for peril and death may have beauty, dignity! When you got back I wanted things to go smoothly for you, wanted you to do your level best, unhampered. I felt so sure Cecile loved you, that you could love her if you let yourself go."

"And you would have let me go—to another woman! Do you call that love?"

She stormed at him, gray eyes gleaming, head flung back, bright hair ruffled like the plumage of some angry bird.

"I never said I loved you, Tony Rand! Never wanted to love you! For I knew you ought to find an utterly different sort of woman, one with beauty, grace, money, not a silly girl living from hand to mouth so she can paint and dream. I've seen them do it so often—artists marrying

each other with nothing but their talents and their passion—seen the struggle, the gradual change of ideals, the perpetual pot-boiling—when once they had dreamed dreams and had seen visions! Sometimes even an ugly jealousy of each other's talent develops—I've seen that, too!"

She paused for an eloquent moment and flung out her hands.

"I wanted to save you from all this, to save you from myself!"

He was staring at her with eyes that laughed at her, yet his lips made a straight line, his chin was dogged. She could see the scar upon his forehead, a livid purple mark. She went on in a voice which had a puzzled, baffled note:

"I can't understand—it's irrelevant, futile! She seemed so right for you, with her temperament, her grace, that lovely head of hers—you never specially wanted to paint *me!* Oh, I believe you're just obstinate, like some balky little boy who hates everything he knows is 'good for him.'"

"I'm anything you like, every possible brand of fool! But I love you!"

Even the magic formula, spoken after long years of sober friendship, could not alter her tense pose, soften her look of strained introspection, that determination to face every bitter, Gradgrind fact in this hour. Then it was that Tony spoke his mind.

"Since you started all this analysis, we'll chase it to cover. You've got to see that this is no cheap passing emotion, mere impulse—that it's based on fundamental things, backed by conviction. And first, you were right when you said that we're all haunted by some secret fear. You nailed my fear! But yesterday I came near bartering my birthright for security, opportunity, success. There was even a mad moment when I wanted that other woman, her burning beauty and youth, the power she can give! Then some-

thing snatched me back. I couldn't do it any more than I could steal or kill. I came home baffled, disappointed, not understanding myself. Then you and Berton together—it was like a surgical operation! I had been blind and my eyes were opened. And if there's a price to pay for this thing I want, this thing you alone can give, then I'll pay it gladly! For years, all the best in me has been yours, but I was a dull clod, deaf, dumb, blind. Now I'm awake, alive, and I can work—with you to help me."

He stopped abruptly. The room was curiously still, but from the street came a muffled sound like the beating of some great, passionate heart.

A small voice said: "But, oh, Tony,

remember that it is a trap, *that I am the bait!*"

"I'm remembering everything. Only tell me that you care, too! Tell me!"

Beyond his tense, scarred face and trembling hands she saw lights glimmer and flash. After the long day of hard, bright, sunlight, beauty was stealing back to the city as a woman steals to her lover, ardent, tender, mysterious. It was their great moment, and Tony heard at last those words for which every man waits. His laugh came, low, curiously triumphant, for a creature in a trap. As his arms slipped around her they heard Berton's ring, then forgot it, forgot everything, save only this kiss, so incredibly different from that other, yesterday.



FRIENDS

MY friends are merry company,
For the life of a gathered flower—
But which shall I take to walk with me
Beyond the festooned hour?

One is a golden daffodil
With bees about its cup,
And one is a blue cornflower,
Tired of standing up.

They bear me silken company,
And yet I cannot choose.
One is a holy candle
Burning to empty pews,

One is a sacred candle
With a pale and ardent light.
But I need a ray as long as a star's
To light my shifting night.

LOLA RIDGE.



The Magic Enterprise

By Katherine Wilson

Author of "The Light," etc.

AS her guardian uncle, I cannot remember a time when Camilla was not faring forth on some ardent adventure. From that day in her extreme youth when, having been missed for hours by a distracted household, she was ultimately found enthroned upon the driver's seat of a passing gypsy van, prepared to depart on joyously indefinite wanderings, until yesterday when through her valiant smiles she waved adieu to the outgoing Yucatan, her career has been one of gay emprise.

It will not do to say that Camilla should have been a boy, for in her farings there has been something of abandon to the pursuit that is wholly feminine. Your masculine soldier of fortune goes forth for the pure joy of the encounter; Camilla added to the rapture of living the hunger of the insatiate. She was always seeking, seeking. And if one had asked her for what, perhaps she would hardly have known how to answer. "Life," she used to say, "is a magic enterprise," and she had embarked upon it—well, as one might expect the granddaughter of a skipper of the old merchant marine to set out upon a voyage. Her course laid for the Cape of Good Hope and beyond, she looked confidently to return one day with a

cargo of pulque and poppy seeds, sandalwood and ivories, jades and lacquers and orange pekoe, and incense-scented silks and peacock fans—Camilla dealt in no more prosaic merchandise!—and in her going she was like nothing so much as a stream-lined clipper ship with all sails spread, tacking gallantly through uncharted waters.

For from the first Camilla scorned charts and compasses. "All the world may find its way by the needle," she declared. "As for me, I'll go by my own dead reckoning. For what else is one given the privilege of life but to plumb for one's self the deeps?" Any less enterprising seamanship was unworthy of a navigator!

Perhaps it is a divine selfishness, that ardor of youth which chooses the unfrequented lanes, the uncharted ways; at any rate, it is the spirit of the true romance. It is the brave egoism of life itself, winging on its course among the spheres with—shall any man say what chart or compass? And yet, as I think of it now, Camilla kept her bearings. Derelict, as they called her, that fact stands out now with arresting gesture. Through all the deviations of those adventurous years, it was with unerring instinct that Camilla pursued her gallant journey, even to the Never-Never Land.

But I speak in metaphors! In reality Camilla did not, like her forbears, actually go down to the sea in ships. Camilla was more modern. When, as the major in her college course, she elected archaeology and declared it her profession, of course the relatives all exclaimed, but Camilla smiled radiantly. "That is only because you don't know archaeology," she said. "Why, archaeology is adventure into the land of forgotten secrets! It is kissing the mouth of the Sphinx! It is building air castles with the wreckage of time!" "None of which," sniffed prissy Cousin Anne, "do I call seemly conduct," and the family agreed.

When, therefore, on her graduation, Camilla sailed off joyously to Peru to dig among the Inca ruins with her beloved old Professor Purdy and his bespectacled son, who was something distinguished in anthropology, that verdict was confirmed. It was deemed an unseemly proceeding. I was loftily reminded that the responsibility would be wholly mine, a burden to which I cheerfully acceded, and when with equal cheer I maintained Camilla's right to her own adventures, there followed the usual bemoaning of that misguided parental judgment which had trusted the upbringing of an orphan girl to the perilous liberalities of such an old pagan as I. But Camilla and I had chuckled over these lamentations so often in the privacy of our own establishment, that the family disapproval lay lightly on my conscience. How could they suspect, as I did, that archaeology was but the vehicle in which Camilla pursued her magic enterprise? or to what extent Camilla could be relied upon to find her way? At any rate, when Camilla returned the following year, brown as an Indian—though with a touch of weariness, I thought—and announced her intention of marrying the young anthropologist, the fact went far toward reestablishing family relations.

Marriage, said the relatives, with the fatalism of the initiate, would settle her!

There followed the Adventure of the Furled Sail. I think the very novelty of it had, at first, its lure for her. To lie securely at anchor in the calm of a landlocked port, rocking gently with the cradle of the tide—what woman of all the ages does not hark to the seduction of it! And Camilla had never before paused to listen to the bell-buoy note. It fell upon her ear now with a strange, new, tentative appeal, like softly intriguing voices whispering to the eternal feminine in her. I wonder if that exaltation which is inevitably part of a woman's self-abnegation does not go far toward anaesthetizing its pain! At least, I think it was so with Camilla. The domestic life—was it not itself an adventure in contentment? And to her who was seeking adventures— She contemplated it with a curious measuring of its depths. It was the deep-sea divers, she reflected, who came up with the treasure. I believe her very submergence appeared as an alluring, an unsuspected opportunity. But—and this was what made it really possible to her—she came to it in the breathless elation of that supreme surrender which elects to find life most fully, in giving it. It was so like Camilla, after all.

I never quite understood why she had taken to young Purdy—harmless enough chap, to be sure, but one of that species of academic hybrid which seems always out of place anywhere but in a laboratory. And I could not imagine Camilla pursuing her Magic Enterprise in a specimen room! However, who knows with what potentialities a woman's vagarious mind will not invest the object of her romantic mood? I fancy the fellowship among those Inca mounds, the shared enthusiasms, the isolation—ah, well, propinquity has been ever a tricky wizard with youth.

But it was plain that whatever imagination there was between them, it was Camilla's portion. Indeed, as I think of it now, I wonder if perhaps it had not been the constant draining of the cup of her imaginative spirit, among those ruins—the too abundant giving of her joyous youth to sustain the task's romance—that had brought her home that year, a little wearied and with an ear attuned to the lulling note of the harbor bell!

For it was of short duration, this furling of her sails! In a haze of domestic dreaming, Camilla attended pre-nuptial teas and sewed industriously on filmy under-things. She was presented with favorite recipes for snet puddings and whole-wheat gems; she was apprised of Cousin Wilfrid's prejudice against flannelette pajamas, and was regaled with Uncle George's insistence upon the salubrious qualities of hot milk toast for breakfast. She learned minutely how Aunt Minnie had broken up Cousin Dan's bronchitis with cold flannel packs, and was advised how Cora Hendee, a mere bride, had broken her husband of snoring. And then, one day Camilla was gone!

"I should have died of it, Nunkie!" she wrote me from the institute in town in her erratic, racy hand. "Please make my peace with them. I've told Mr. Purdy, of course, and he seemed relieved. I suspect it has been something of a strain upon him, poor dear, trying to keep pace with my illusions. By great good fortune I am just in time to join an expedition out to Aztec land—to resurrect barbaric splendors! A little more, and I should have missed it. So I'm off. 'By, old dear!'"

Score one for the Magic Enterprise! And yet—"illusions?" I wondered. It was a word which had not featured in Camilla's vocabulary. Ah, well, I mused, it spoke well for Camilla's navigating that, having taken her sounding and found shallows, she had up-

anchored and steered away. Too gallant a sailor, she, to be stranded on a reef!

We saw little of Camilla for two or three years. She was here, there, and everywhere—now in Yucatan, then in Colorado, once among the Mokis, and again in Egypt. When at last she did return, and with extraordinary zeal plunged into work at the institute, to my discerning eye there was a new thoughtfulness about her, a certain startled awareness that looked out of her eyes. One might almost have suspected her of having "kissed the mouth of the Sphinx!" It was as if she had encountered something that had taken her by surprise, and left her a little shaken. Her belated seriousness, however, was highly gratifying to the family. "Life," she declared confidently that year, "is only a matter of finding your place." And she was ready, it seemed, to believe, at twenty-five, that she had found her own—in a specimen room! She had made some new discoveries concerning the Inca hieroglyphs, and she had undertaken a monograph on certain forgotten secrets, which bade fair to absorb her indefinitely. "After all," she declared with a valiant attempt to believe it, "the real satisfactions are to be found only in one's work."

I waited patiently for the revelation. When, as always, she eventually came to me with it, it was to admit ruefully that this time her journey had taken her into strange waters, that she had dropped her plumb line into a treacherous deep. For there had been the Adventure with the Way-faring Mariner.

He had galloped into the camp of the expedition one evening, out of the desert's mysteries, his keen blue eyes glinting out of a sun-browned face in which a flash of white teeth relieved the black shadow of a carefully cropped mustache—a man of the world, obviously, by the proprietary air with which the

sweep of his sombrero and his smiling speech bade them "Welcome to our city!" Camped with a prospecting party over on the mesa, he told them, he had seen the smoke of their camp fires and had ridden over to proffer a neighborly greeting. And his coolly level eyes, having made their investigating survey of the camp and pausing to rest upon Camilla, had lingered there with a pleased approval of his own undertaking.

She was in her riding clothes, a jauntily boyish figure, no doubt, and sufficiently unique in her youth, among her classic associates, to have stood out conspicuously if she had not happened at the moment to be occupied with her pony a little distance apart. She was not missed by the eyes of the stranger.

He was a "mining man," he admitted to her presently, when, sauntering over to lend a hand with her saddle, he had engaged her casually in conversation—from everywhere and nowhere—what did it matter? Why tag one's self always, he asked her, like a piece of hand luggage checked through to a destination? Life was much more pleasing an adventure without tags and labels. As for him, he was an apostle of the Great Adventure, and she—if she permitted?—the same might be said of her—was it not so? "And I—smiling," said Camilla, "I admitted it, and he congratulated me. Life, he said casually, was for living, as wine for drinking, a full cup offered to the lips of man who—was an ingrate if he failed to take it! The gallant spirit, he declared, drank to the dregs, scorning not to know the full measure of its pleasure and its pain; and with the draining, shattered the glass and drank again, until all its varied flavors had been tasted. It was a brave philosophy, I agreed. Though many professed it, few had the courage to live it. Slackers, he smiled, slackers with life! For could any man say he had

wholly lived who had left any of life's wine untouched?" Camilla paused in the telling. "And do you know, Nunkie," she said, "I had never thought of it that way!"

Naturally, Camilla had not. Her epicurism had not extended so far! To my ardent Camilla, to whom life has been always a luminous generality, sparkling and multicolored, it had not occurred to segregate it into flavors, to divide and specify its experiences, so pleasing had she found the blend. And so I could fancy her making a bewildered gesture when he spoke, incidentally, of the "champagne of love"—which, he said, should always be followed with the absinth of oblivion! A cynic, was he? Ah, but cynicism was but the sparkling essence of wisdom, the tang on one's tongue from taking life's pleasures at the full. Bitterness lay only in the dregs. "But the dregs!" had protested Camilla with fine valor. "One should not falter at the dregs!" "Least of all at the dregs!" he had cried triumphantly.

She confessed that it was all rather delightful fooling, this touching of the rims of metaphorical glasses, an act a little dazzling for the element of daring in it, something of intoxication in scenting the aroma of elusive things. She admitted that in the thick of archæological dust it was refreshing. The truth was that with antiquities and antiquarians Camilla was just then a bit fagged. She confessed also to that—the enterprise had somehow failed her. The romance, she added ruefully, had not been there! And I smiled. So the Inca hieroglyphs—I ventured. Camilla made an inconsequent gesture. Oh, the hieroglyphs, she said impatiently, hieroglyphs aren't *life*!

Ah, Camilla, the seeking, the seeking—always it is its own salvation and despair! As I listened now, I tried to picture her out there, a disciple of that scientific smugness which potters about

with its nose to the ground—Camilla, on her Magic Enterprise!—and got a glimpse of the pathos of her, of the pathos of all Camillas. The dreamers—those fanciful eyes that are always visioning new splendors just ahead—is it not the eternal destiny of these to find, when they come to the place, only the dust of sepulchral mounds and ruined temples? That was what Camilla did not know; by the grace of a tender mercy such a one never does know. But the elusiveness—she was beginning to perceive that much and resent it. Life, a matter of denials and proscriptions? She would not have it so! The human spirit demanded and was entitled to its full measure. Life was for living! So—it was the gesture of her own, the gay insouciance with which she listened to this stranger, the impulsive rebellion of youth with which she applauded and agreed. "Somehow," she said, still glowing, "through his breezy insolences one found a fine, new courage. One had dreams of brave pursuits and lofty scorn, of daring faiths, of passionate living, and triumphant passing, all in godlike contempt of the pettinesses of men. One saw life itself a vast irreverence for anything but—life!" Thus spake Camilla's pagan soul!

He had ridden away. But he came again—to challenge her. Galloping over at twilight the following day, "Come and forget for a while your dusty fossils," he had begged her in a low aside. "Come for a ride with me on the mesa." And Camilla, daring, had vaulted into her saddle and ridden with him.

It had been the beginning of many rides. Repeatedly, in the tropic twilight he had cantered over, and tilting her into her seat, had swept with her out over the plain. They rode hard. Hatless, throat bared to the kisses of the wind, reins dangling in her lean, brown hands, she had swung to the

rhythm of her pony's gait, and to the rapid tattoo of the hoofbeats in the sand, had laughed her joy in freedom. Afterward, on the ambling return, they had talked in subdued tones. Beside her, the flash of his smile in the dark, the easy level of his voice, were eloquent of power. Daring pursuits they talked of, and lofty scorn. Of the joy of living. And the Magic Enterprise. Always they spoke in large generalities. And it was significant of Camilla that in her ingenuous ardors she never applied particularly her theme, or thought to attach it to the moment with a direct significance. That was why, when the revelation came, she was taken unawares.

They had been speaking—largely, as usual—of great passions. He had rallied her with an ironic reference to the Decaloguean world—and Camilla had flamed. "Ah," she had cried passionately, "as if love—great love—were not cheap at the price of the whole world!"

There had been an instant, a swiftly illuminating instant, of snatching arms, and hot lips, and half-spoken words, of which she remembered most her sense of sacrilege, before she had torn herself furiously away. He had dared—*he!* As she told it, Camilla laughed her scorn. He! "I hadn't realized until then," she said, "the cheapness of him—this wayfarer!" Now, all at once, she saw him—saw him as the clever performer with the vaunted wine glasses, the profane dallier with life's spirit. Its varied flavors! Never, she saw, had there been but one flavor in his cup, never but one savor to his meanings. The profanation to her faith—it was as if some passing charlatan had swaggered into the sanctuary and juggled the communion wines! And when, incensed, she told him so, he had shrugged a smile and left her—a sneer at her simplicity, which her own heart echoed!

That was the secret of the startled

awareness in her eyes when she came home—the knowledge that in an unguarded moment she had permitted her shining bark to be steered into turbid waters. It was an arresting discovery for Camilla—that a shining bark *could* be steered into turbid waters! It was the thing that had left her startled, and a little shaken.

And so—it was good to be home again, she said, with a little *moue* of contrition; like making a grateful port after a tempestuous voyage. But with Camilla this was always so, for in reality she had a passionate instinct for the fireside. That was one of the things which made her comings and goings always acute. I think my maid of the Magic Enterprise never went away but it was with an ache in the throat which the irresistible urge to go could not dispel; there was that continual conflict in her. She must have been racked with it at times—Camilla of the insatiable soul!

But Camilla was not with us long. It was just when the kinfolk were beginning to enjoy a pleasurable sense of security about her, congratulating themselves that at last she was comfortably berthed, that to the general consternation there came the announcement that, the monograph forgotten, the specimen room fled, Camilla was once more on the wing. She tried to explain it to me before she went—with a kind of premonitory terror in her eyes. "You see—if ever I shouldn't *want* to go, Nunkie! If some time I should no longer desire to fill my sails and head for the open sea——" Alas, the Magic Enterprise!

For the next half dozen years Camilla sailed the main, no sooner well under way in one direction than she struck off tangentially in another, first on one expedition, then on an entirely different one. Now and then she made a brief home port, only to weigh anchor and be off again, a persistent slipping

from her moorings which filled the family with dismay. To their distress, they saw Camilla that most alarming vagary of the times, an unanchored woman. And such erratic tacking! No sort of seamanship—that, boomed Uncle George. No port was gained by changing from course to course. That way lay the rocks. But didn't they see, persisted Cousin Anne, from the snug haven of chronic spinsterhood, that Camilla *had* no port? That was the trouble. Camilla was a tramp. She was worse than that: she was—was a derelict! Curiously, the appellation stuck, and Camilla, somewhere among the Maya plateaus, pursued by the reproachful term, wrote home in joyous appreciation; admitted the erratic drift of her bark—that was the delight of it; one went by the plumb-line!—and confessed that if it came to that, she would rather be a derelict, swinging out with the tide, than tie up to a wharf to grow barnacles.

And so it was that Camilla had entered her abundant thirties when she came to her Great Adventure.

Perhaps it was one of Fate's little mockeries that Eric Bentham was and had been all along through Camilla's adventurings, a member of her own institute at home, though it was at the seaside that she met him, where both had gone to escape the city summer. And it was significant that the place each had chosen was one of those gloriously isolated spots along the rim of the sea's chalice, where brimming enchantment bubbles and spills over in a wine too exquisite for the common taste. The great cup with its sapphire flow seemed held up only to lips that knew the charm of life's diviner flavors.

She had come suddenly upon him stretched out supine among the rocks, bared arms and throat and upturned face inviting the lave of wind and sun, while half-closed eyes drank in the

sparkle of the sea. By the lithe and sinewy power of him he might have just stepped down from Olympus; and by the grimness of his features and the gray at his temples he could not be one of the lesser gods. When he saw her standing in her tentative imminence, wondering, he had sprung to his feet to ask if she were Aphrodite, for if she were it was a direct answer to his dreaming—he had just been thinking what the gods were missing in being exiled from the earth. They had no sea on Parnassus!

What mortal yet has had the power to tell how love effects its alchemy—what potency lies in a look, a phrase, a gesture, the quiver of an eyelid, the touch of finger tips, that suddenly all the world is charged with rapture? None but the gods may know, and they keep the secret well, for it is their mightiest miracle. But it is given man at least to quaff the nectar, and thus become one with them.

Camilla has never tried to explain the magic. I needed only the sight of her radiance on the one or two occasions that summer when I had fleeting glimpses of her, to know that she had kissed the cup. She knew my knowledge needed no inanity of words. But later, when the practical phases of life had once more claimed her, she told me something of its workings. Life, he had said to her, was a seeking for one's own—I could see Camilla's acclamatory gesture!—yet it was one of the subtle ironies that life was not to be found *by* the seeking, but *in* it. And so, all of life was really a great adventure. Perhaps it was something more than mere coincidence that Bentham's idea of the quest tallied so perfectly with her own. One is tempted to suspect a deeper law than chance at work among these mutualities. But it was a thing she quite understood when he told her how, being a civil engineer, always his great dream had

been to be an explorer—how, held by chain and sextant, as it were, to metes and bounds, he had yearned always for the borderless regions and the untrod wilderness. And Camilla had smiled—she who had sought the unfrequented lanes, the uncharted deeps! It was not surprising that their spirits sprang to meet each other in passing, that together their eyes turned toward those places of their hearts' desires—or that they dreamed.

They dreamed! Long hours they sat among the rocks or walked along the sands, with romance creating mirages for their visioning. They talked of journeyings. It was a kind of ecstatic game which their imaginations loved to play, with fine forgetfulness of actualities. There was that place, he told her, where the sea broke in showers of pearls upon a golden strand, and peacocks and cockatoos preened themselves in the sun at the forest's edge. There, leafy mazes led far back into jungle depths where monkeys and flaming parrakeets, chattering and screaming, disputed one's way among the mango, coconut, and breadfruit trees. And one went on and on, through scents of aconite and cassia, guava and eucalyptus, past riches in cacao and chicle and rubber-tree gums, in the spell of the going forgetting the world and all its trafficking, until one day one came out beyond—and presented to it a new kingdom. Thus, he said covetously, did the discoverer perform his duty to his time. And there was that other place, she told him, where under the dust of a thousand years lay pillared temples and sculptured shrines, and round about the walls of circling bastions and tall watch towers which had kept vigil over a nation's greatness—the crumbling ruins of these. And here the antiquarian came on pilgrimage, striving to know the majesty of another day—to see again the flare of banners, the flash of

steel, the sheen of gold on minarets and towers, the flutter of gorgeous panoplies; to hear the crash of cymbals, the fanfare of trumpets, the march of triumphant armies—to know, for its lesson, the secret of a nation's splendor, and of its passing!—that the world might be the better for the knowing.

Thus they confessed their faiths—and dreams.

There was no place where one could say, here she knew that he loved her, there he saw the answer in her eyes. That hour may have been struck in primordial time. It was beyond the knowledge of both. But silently, simply, they beheld the miracle. There had come a day when the glory of it had swept over them, when hands and eyes and lips had met in sanctification; and there had been no need for speech.

It was early in their acquaintance that he had spoken of his wife. It had been an unfortunate marriage, he told her, for reasons that now had little pertinence. They had not been happy. Then had occurred a motor accident in which she had received a blow that produced an apparently irremediable pressure on the brain. For five years she had been in a sanitarium, unconscious. An operation, it was feared, would have fatal results, but there was a chance that nature might repair the wound, though it might be years.

It was consistent, in those magical days, how remotely this third factor bore upon their relation. Reduced to its simple terms—and all things with Camilla and Bentham in those days were reduced to profoundly simple terms—there was no issue. That which had been was—no more. It had vanished into the limbo of unrealities. There remained only what was. And it was eloquent of their mutual understanding that neither was willing to put a limitation upon the magnitude of that

which was their own. Each paid the other the tribute of a great faith in which there was no place for issues.

So, it was, with no account of probabilities that they played their enchanting game of journeying to the magical places—and always with the simple assumption of being together—a game that concerned itself only with Camilla's quest for forgotten secrets and Bentham's search for what never had been. It was the Magic Enterprise. Tentatively, they had talked of the Andes. There was a place which seemed to have been made especially for them. For there, he told her, great things were to be done in exploration, and there, she reminded him, was the seat of the ancient Incas!

Then, one day, Bentham had come to her, radiant. "Suppose," he cried, "there were a way to make it real! Suppose—I have an offer to go to Patagonia on a railway project." Then—it was his tribute to Camilla that he did not hesitate. "You'll go with me, beloved. With me! Ah, I shall be very tender of you," he had added humbly.

And it was Camilla's tribute that she did not falter. True to that fervor which had found a great love cheap at the price of the whole world, she lifted a shining face.

"It shall be the Magic Enterprise—with you," she had answered him.

Quite simply she told me the story and discussed their plans. He would be leaving within the month. She would join him at a Southern port, and it was uncertain when they would return. It was like her suddenly to grip my hands, her lips quivering, the old conflict raging within her, and the knowledge of the family censure—perhaps for the last time. I could only be glad. At least the poignancy of her comings and goings would be spared her now. Yet it spoke for her intrepidity that she made no palliating assur-

ances, that she accepted the verdict that great happiness must always have tragedy for a handmaiden.

And Camilla was very happy! That exultation of supreme surrender, that dream of brave pursuits and lofty scorn, of radiant, passionate living and as triumphant passing, "in godlike contempt of the pettinesses of men;" that vast irreverence for anything but life—they would assuredly be hers now in abundant measure! It seemed as if all her experiences had been preparing her but for this—even the fruitlessness of her wanderings. For if her cargoes hitherto had oftener been of samphire and aloes than of incense-scented silks and peacock fans, her voyage now bade fair to be rich in treasure all the more precious for the others' profitlessness. It was Camilla's due!

In the days preceding the date of his departure, Bentham was with us much, and among us three there was the understanding of those whom life honors with the weight of its sanctities. I think it was his fine consistency which pleased me most—his infallible honor. And as destiny would have it, it was this, after all, which was their tragedy.

A week before he was to sail he came one day with news from the sanitarium. His wife was in a critical state. There had been a sudden change for the worse. The surgeons offered a single chance that an operation would save her life; otherwise—

There are times when speech goes dumb, and silence becomes babblingly vocative, voicing what speech would seek to smother. None of us spoke in the pause which hung on Bentham's word, each of us groping for some fit thing with which to cloak the mute disclosure. One chance that an operation would save her life—and her sanity? otherwise— The agility with which one's thoughts leap to the issue, the problem, the simple expedient. The damnable celerity! It

was in a bewilderment of torments, contingencies, that I presently heard Bentham saying, as he turned tragically to Camilla, that he must go—had been granted but a moment; he had consulted with the surgeons and it had been decided to operate at once. And suddenly there was released a fearful tension. Camilla had hardly moved. But after he had gone she came over and hid her face on my shoulder, and when I took her in my arms she was trembling.

I did not see Bentham when he came the following morning. I was informed by the maid that he had arrived, but he had gone when I entered the library. Camilla was nowhere to be seen, but I had an instinctive sense of her having been there—a consciousness of her presence but a moment before. On a rug near the middle of the room, however, I discovered a piece of note paper lying open where it had apparently been dropped, and with a premonitory trembling of the hands I picked it up, the intuition strong upon me that it had been meant for me to see. On the letterhead of the sanitarium I read:

DEAR BENTHAM: I am glad to advise you that the operation has been successful. Your wife will live, though I fear with her mind permanently impaired. For a long time she will require very tender care, which, of course, you can give her. You may see her in a few days. Yours,
RUTLEDGE.

When Camilla and I met again—she had kept to her room in the interim—she was pale, but there was the old valor in her eyes. We did not speak of what was uppermost in our minds. Instead, she began telling me at once of an expedition going out from the institute to Central America—some astonishing new discoveries—a great opportunity—would be sailing within the week.

I gazed at her, marveling. I had a moment of exultation, of tremendous pride in her sheer indomitableness.

Still the Magic Enterprise! I gloried in her—until suddenly, with a confounding effect of fatality there came floating back to me a memory of Camilla's ardent young voice so long ago declaiming the delights of archæology—"building air castles with the wreckage of time"—and I was stricken. The tragic futility of it all, the piteous waste of this exuberant vitality that was Camilla! Perhaps she saw it in my face. For something in the helpless fluttering of her eyes, then their sudden swift flight to mine—I had a vision of that old premonitory terror, heard again that cry, "But if ever I shouldn't want to go, Nunkie! If some time I should no longer desire to fill my sails and head for the open sea!" In a flash I saw it—the imminent eventuality, and in the face of it—youth fighting, fighting desperately for life.

Only once in the following days did she speak of Bentham, and then it was wrung from her by some reference to her own freedom to go. "Ah, that is the thing I cannot bear," she cried then, "the thought of the long years for him—the bondage—never to have his dream!"

So I think it was the grind of this, some impulse of revolt in outcry, that brought her to me the day before she was to sail, a little breathless.

"Will you come with me to the sanitarium, Nunkie?" she asked. "Something—I must see her—I cannot go alone—"

It was Bentham himself who came down in answer to our request of the nurse that we see Mrs. Bentham, and his swift look of question as he turned to lead the way went unanswered by Camilla. Her eyes were looking straight ahead, in her conflict desperately unseeing. With his hand on the door knob Bentham turned. "She does not remember me," he said, indicating the patient in the room, "and she is very melancholy." Then he led us in.

Into the sunshine that streamed through a honeysuckle-latticed window, Mrs. Bentham's bed had been drawn, and propped among the pillows lay a pallid figure that seemed given a sign of permanent mourning by a band of heavy black hair that coroneted the blank, white face. A pair of somber eyes were turned toward the window, and very carefully, quite seriously, thin, transparent fingers were reaching out to pluck at the spots of sunlight that bobbed and danced among the leaves. As we entered, the great eyes revolved toward us with a question, as if in dumb protest at the constantly recurring bewilderments in which she found herself, bewilderments which had somehow to be borne, but which were very, very wearisome. A frail, uncomprehending soul, she was, a vagrant, groping through vast spaces, piteously alone.

As we stood for a moment, stricken by the pathos of her, her eyes traveled slowly to Camilla and paused, held perhaps by something of wretchedness she discerned in the quivering figure.

"Doesn't any one care for you?" she asked then, sympathetically, as if that were the one great cause for grief. "Ah, but no one cares for me, either, you see." She imparted it as a simple, irremediable truth. "No one ever cares!" Guiltily the eyes of each of us dropped before her gaze. That this reality should be all which was left to her poor bereft mind!

Suddenly, Camilla uttered a little choking cry. The next moment she was down beside her, stroking her, crooning over her, weeping softly. "Ah, my poor, poor dear!" she murmured, brokenly.

The bewildered eyes gazed upon her as she knelt. Presently a trembling finger was lifted to touch Camilla's face.

"Why, can it be that you care for me?" the thin voice quavered, a gleam of hope creeping into her eyes. "You called me 'poor dear!'"

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Camilla could bear no more. All at once she sprang up and turned to Bentham.

"Eric!" she cried, her hands outstretched. "Eric! You must give her to me—you must let me have her—to care for. It is the way—the wonderful way. Because for you there is Patagonia—don't you see? Patagonia!" She repeated it with a triumphant gesture. "While for me—why the seeking is over! Anyway, we have been wrong, Eric—you and I. Quite wrong. Life is something more than the seeking. There is the giving. Ah, let me have her for my own, let me take her home with me to cherish—for all our sakes!" She paused. Then, "I—I shall

always be very tender of her," she added humbly with a smile.

Bentham seized her hands and crushed them in his own. "It shall be—as you wish it, beloved!" he said, from the depths of his own complete understanding.

And so it was arranged. Into the haven of her own steadfastness, Camilla bore Mrs. Bentham home, having to the last with unerring instinct plumbed the deeps, and by her own reckoning found her way safely through uncharted waters. Bentham sailed yesterday on the *Yucatan*, and through her smiles Camilla waved him gallantly adieu as he bore away at last on his own uncharted passage, outward bound.



EPITAPH

THINK of me when the pounding sea
 Paws at the sand with savage glee;
 Or the freezing wind, on a sunny day,
 Sets the glittering, ice-clad trees asway;
 Or when, in some broad, open space,
 You meet the night sky face to face.
 And up from the daisy fields some noon,
 Send me a thought because it's June.

Oh, recollect I felt the worth
 Of all the lovely things of earth—
 Of burning leaves and shady trees,
 Of snow and shy anemones,
 Of stones washed clean in rippling brooks,
 Of curving roads and books—and books—
 Of barking dogs, and the brave noise
 Of blithe, expostulating boys,
 Of fire's multicolored spell,
 Of you—my friends that I loved so well.

And you, in the love that was my pride,
 Remember I lived, forget I died.

JOSEPHINE A. MEYER.



The Way the Wind Blows

By May Edginton

Author of "The Woman Who Broke the Rule,"
"The Price of Wings," etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

Rosa Loftus, a young Englishwoman, who has been engaged in war work in France, returns with a strong distaste for the characteristic inactivity of women of her class. She determines to make her own way, her zeal being heightened by the fact that her father's fortune has been greatly augmented by "war profits," of which she thoroughly disapproves. In her enterprise she has the sympathy of her friends, the Duchess of Cleve-moor and the Comtesse Lavallière. Rosa breaks her engagement to the duchess' nephew, Wyngate Cox, a titled young gentleman who has played an easy part in the war. Rigidly opposed in her business plans by her father and Cox, and refused any financial aid, she seeks out Miles Rutherford, a corporal who had done her a small favor in France. He loans her five hundred pounds at six per cent—a purely business deal. While in his office, Rosa's glance falls on the picture of a girl whose face holds her interest. On the picture is written: "From Blanche. Thank you." As Rutherford and Rosa are leaving to go to a small shop which Rosa has in mind for her millinery business, "Blanche" comes in. Rutherford hastily arranges a meeting for seven that evening.

CHAPTER V.

AFTER such a businesslike afternoon," said Rutherford about five o'clock, "don't you think you've earned tea and pleasure?"

She smiled absently. All through the afternoon, while they had been in and out of little dingy, disheveled, empty rooms with plate-glass windows, Blanche's face had recurred to her. During the great matter of decision, the talking with agents, the provision by Rutherford of his unimpeachable personal reference for her integrity, the other girl's rapid up-and-down look seemed still running over her. They had settled on the Knightsbridge place; the decorating scheme—purple and white; the date of occupation; everything. It had been a most important afternoon, and yet—she found herself

thinking of foolish trifles like that. She found herself trying to read Rutherford deeper, looking at him when he was talking to the agent and asking herself, "I wonder if any man is really what some woman thinks him?" And she was so quiet over the whole business that she surprised him.

"Let us," he repeated, "go and find tea and pleasure."

"Where is it?"

"Tea! Everywhere at five o'clock."

"I meant pleasure."

"Come!" said he. "You mustn't get serious-minded already! Your responsibilities are not yet so heavy upon you. As a matter of fact, when you're most worried, most busy, and most oppressed with the cares of your enterprise, you'll find yourself keener than ever over the little joys of life."

What particular joy do you suggest to-day?"

"Let's dance for an hour. I'll drive you to Carlton's." He named a famous dance club. "I dare say you're a member. So am I."

"I was before the war."

"Come and frivol again. It'll do you good."

He ushered her into the car

"I should have thought," she said, "that you would hate frivolous women."

"You're wrong," he replied. "All men love frivolous women."

"How amazing!"

"No," said Rutherford, "merely natural."

She leaned back beside him, very cool and preoccupied. He knew her to be preoccupied over something that had happened, possibly, that afternoon, but he could not guess what it might be. She had come to his office-eager and joyous; she had left it quiet, a little cold. And yet she had had her will; he had set himself immediately to do the thing she wanted. Her littlest wish he had received as a matter of urgency. He thought:

"It may be something very small—no doubt it is; but she will make it into something very great, like all women, if I can't somehow clear the air."

By direct tactics he essayed it:

"You're very thoughtful, Miss Loftus."

"Am I?"

"Or are you tired?"

"Not a bit."

"You're not disappointed?"

"On the contrary, I'm simply crazy with delight. I hadn't expected anything to be done so quickly—at once, this very afternoon. It has all been splendid, thanks to you."

"You know it has been a delight to me, too."

He was no further, and he paused there, thinking. "Incomprehensible!"

he said to himself. He drew up at the doors of Carlton's.

"I haven't been here for nearly five years."

"Nor I," she returned.

They entered. The sound of music ascended to them, and they went down into the dancing room. The floor was crowded, and down one side of the long room and in all the alcoves, tea was being served. They sat down at the nearest vacant table and each looked around with curiosity.

"Interesting to be here again," said Rutherford. "New music, new types; all the people and the frocks are different. Surely women paint more than they did." His eyes traveled from face to face, to all the alluring, laughing, provocative faces, and came back to rest on his companion's. "One might go for a whole day in London and not find another girl so natural looking as you are," he said simply.

With her narrow white gown, her black hat and black sunshade with the jade-green top, he thought she could not have looked sweeter. He longed to say, "By God! I am proud of you!" The natural pleasure of a man in being with a very well-dressed and pretty woman flowed through him, and he looked his homage.

She poured out tea, still pensive, and he said:

"You're thinking over something, some hitch, some difficulty, and I wish you would tell me what it is."

"There is nothing to tell—no hitch, no difficulty, since you've been so extremely kind."

"Oh, hang my kindness!" said Rutherford, dismissing it with a laugh.

They sat in silence for a while, watching the sway of the dancers across the floor. They ebbed and flowed slowly like a languorous tide.

"Dancing's changed again," said Rutherford.

She nodded absently. The place, being below ground level, was lighted softly; the lights all hung in inverted bowls of pink. Frocks, although it was yet afternoon and they were worn with hats, were almost as décolleté as the evening gowns of five years before; and it seemed to the two who had so newly returned that a deeper, a more passionate, note had crept into the dancing.

"Let us dance if you will," said Rutherford presently, and they left their table and glided together on to the dancing floor.

Almost at once they moved perfectly together, a rare thing in present-day dancing—which has reached so high an amateur level—for people who have never danced together before. She was elastic, pliant, and light; and he saw with secret pleasant jealousy how the heads of many men, also dancing, turned for a swift glance at her as they passed. And when they had looked once, they always looked twice when they passed again.

They danced together until the rhythm of their steps fitted exquisitely. Fox trot, waltz, and one-step, all were joy. Rosa had forgotten Blanche; she had forgotten all but her renewed delight. Her cheeks were flushed, her eyes bright, her voice happy. She felt that post-war life, the contemplation of which had so perplexed her, was settling itself, beginning under the most fortunate auspices. Difficulties were vanishing, doubts were nil. Her spirits rose and soared; her soul was radiant. And in Rutherford's arms she thought:

"Oh, if we could only dance on and on and on, perhaps I could express the tiniest bit of what I feel! Perhaps I'd dance it quiet!"

Then, even as she thought that, the music stopped, and as they lingered on the floor with the other dancers, hoping for an encore, she saw Rutherford glance at the watch on his wrist.

"Seven o'clock?" she thought coldly. "And that girl?"

The band broke again into the waltz. "I'm tired," she said. "Let's sit down." They went back to their table, and a silence that was slightly strained fell again.

Rutherford looked at the watch on his wrist.

"I think," said the girl, "I'll have to go home."

"I'll drive you back."

"No. Don't trouble. You have an appointment."

"There will be time."

She rose, and they went out. The evening, even in London, was softly beautiful.

"One ought to go and dine somewhere out of town," said Rutherford, "and drive back. There's a lovely moon."

"Are you going to dine somewhere out of town and drive back in the moonlight?" she returned.

"No," said Rutherford. "Not as matters stand. I meant—you and I."

"Ah," she smiled coolly—"that would be impossible."

"One evening, perhaps?"

"Perhaps."

"Thank you."

The drive home was quiet. She nodded "good-by" quickly, and let herself in, not pausing in the doorway to smile another farewell—though he was waiting for her to do it—or to see the car start away.

The house was cool, the hall sweet with flowers, the atmosphere graceful and rich. She was giving it all up.

She picked up her letters from the table. There was one from Wyngate. He was not a great letter writer, had written to her but seldom, and then considered the infrequent missives of great weight and import, but she knew his writing at once. She carried the letters upstairs.

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still fresh, scenting the purple-and-white room. She sank into a chair, threw off her hat, looked around, and was sentimentally glad that she was taking a purple-and-white memory with her to the Knightsbridge place. Because—this was a dear room, planned by whatever emotion in Cyril took the place of fatherly love. It was a dear, dear room.

She broke the seal of Cox's letter first.

It began: "Darling."

"I wish he wouldn't!" she thought with a tremor.

Cox wrote:

DARLING: Tell me you didn't mean to hurt me as you did yesterday. Send me a message, Rosa dear. Write to me. Ring me up, and tell me to come and see you. I love you. I can't think what more a woman wants. I swear you shall have all I've got to give. Write to me, won't you?
WYNGATE.

"All you've got to give," she thought, lounging in the chair. "But I don't want any of it. Is that so impossible for a man to understand, I wonder?"

She sat there idly, twisting Cox's letter in her fingers and wishing there could be an end of importunity. As she sat there, Cyril tapped on her door, received permission, and entered.

"Dear child, not dressed?"

"I'm dining at home alone, in a wrapper."

"Tired?"

"Not a bit."

"Had a thrilling day?"

"Ever such a charming day, father."

"May I sit down a moment, love, if you don't want to hurry into that wrapper? Thanks. Yes, I'll have one of your cigarettes. I've missed you—thought you'd be giving me some of your society to-day—the first day home. However——"

His lips twitched into a delicate, indulgent smile.

"I lunched with the duchess."

"Yes. You said you were going there. Was she alone?"

"There was a charming Frenchwoman, the Countess Lavallière, with her."

"She's staying with the duchess for the season," said Cyril.

"I enjoyed meeting her."

"Girl's fencin' with me," Cyril thought. "I suppose she was awfully sick about you and Wyngate?" he added.

"She was rather puzzled, but very nice over it."

"She'd taken it so for granted."

"So you told me last night, father."

"I hope you'll change your mind, love."

"Please don't hope it. Wyn hopes it, too. I have a letter from him here."

"Poor fella!" said Cyril with feeling. "Girls are damn' callous."

"I'm sorry."

"Yes. Yes. But what's your sorrow worth? If you were really sorry, you'd take him."

"And then—would people be sorry for me?"

"Why should they be, my dear? They'd consider you pretty lucky."

"M. Well—I've put all that beyond the bounds of possibility!"

"What, dear?"

"I've taken a definite step."

"What do you mean, my dear? What definite step can you possibly take? Why do you want to take definite steps? Damn' silly!"

"I've had quite a busy afternoon since I left the duchess."

"Get to the point, if there is one, Rosa."

"I've been dancing at Carlton's. How the place has changed!"

"Such an invasion of awful people, my dear! They'll be weeded out again. But you've done nothing very revolutionary in going to Carlton's! Who took you?"

"You wouldn't know his name. He's an architect—rather interesting."

"Indeed? Yes. Well, girls go anywhere with any one. I regret it. Still, they do. You might have been worse occupied, gettin' into some of this silly mischief you talk about."

"I got into that before I went to Carlton's."

"What?"

"I've taken a wee shop in Knights-bridge—the duckiest little place. Listen——"

"I am listening," replied Cyril, getting up and standing straight, his gray eyes staring at her, very cold and opaque.

"It's a five years' lease, and the premises are ideal."

"Nonsense, Rosa! You've no money."

"I borrowed five hundred from a man."

"What the devil do you mean?" said Cyril like ice. "Explain yourself."

"I will," replied the girl.

She threw herself back on the cushions, crossed one knee over the other, and took a cigarette from the box at her side.

"The man I was with this afternoon lent me five hundred pounds."

"What a curious thing to do, Rosa!" said Cyril, sauntering over to the dressing table, where he stood very straight, fiddling with an ivory-back brush.

"I don't think so, father."

"Possibly not, dear. But you must have adopted rather strange ways of thinking these last few years."

"Strange?"

"Ways of thinking that are no use to a woman. What I mean to say is, women—they cannot, and they never have been able to, settle on the proper conventions for themselves. Every one's got to have conventions, more or less, men less and women more. You can't get away from that."

"And so?"

"So women had better let men help 'em over it. That's what I'm tryin' to do with you. I'm pointin' out that you've behaved in a pretty rum way, a way open to nasty misconstruction."

"I took the only way."

"That I don't own."

"I asked you for the money."

"I should never have given it."

"I didn't ask you to, father. It would have been a loan."

"I know women's loans," said Cyril with a half smile.

"If you insinuate——"

"I'm not insinuating, love. I know. Women use the word 'borrow,' but merely as a euphemism. God bless 'em, we wouldn't have it otherwise."

"You think I shan't pay back Mr.——"

Cyril waited.

"Yes. Tell us the fella's name, my dear."

"I don't think I will, after all. It doesn't matter."

"Not matter! Not matter!" said Cyril, calling upon his dignity, not without a lurking amusement at himself. "*Not matter!* It matters a good bit to your father, though it's pretty evident you count him out of the game."

The girl broke out laughing. She lay and laughed. Cyril put his hands in his pockets and walked about thoughtfully.

"I insist on knowing," he said, wheeling round at the other side of the room.

"No good," said the girl, shaking her head.

"I wonder," said Cyril, "how men do manage their blasted daughters. I wish I knew. I can manage a woman—well, as a woman—as ably as any man. But a daughter—no. No; the rôle doesn't suit me. Look here, Rosa. Be a sport. Put the cards on the table and let's have a fair look at 'em."

The girl replied, laughing at him:

"You make a tremendous appeal to me, darling, directly you talk like a human being. But—it's no good. You won't get any forrader. Let's drop it."

"I think the fella's a cad!" said Cyril, infusing what he felt to be a very proper fire into his voice and clinging—still with that lurking amusement—to what he hoped he possessed in the way of parental authority.

"He's not a cad. He's a white man, a sahib."

"Where'd you pick him up?"

"We met in France. He was—No, no."

"Yes, yes. Go on, dear girl. It's so int'restin'!"

"I'm not going to tell you any more."

"In certain moods," said Cyril, sitting on a corner of the dressing table and folding his hands before him with his helpless gesture, "a woman's a regular mule. I should know how to prevent any other woman from getting into a mood like a mule—but a daughter, no! How *do* men manage 'em?"

"Give me up as hopeless. Do, father."

"I trust I realize my responsibility better than that, dear."

How the girl laughed!

"I'm just loving this," she faltered.

"You are, are you, damn you!" said Cyril.

"I assure you, if it will satisfy your scruples and make your mind easier, father, that I shall most conscientiously pay back the loan of—X."

"The day you do that, my dear, will be a disappointin' one for—for X."

"Really?"

"Come, Rosa. This chap's made you a biggish loan that he knows you don't stand an early chance of paying back unless I come to your rescue, and he won't suppose you'll tell *me*. He doesn't want your money—not if he's got plenty of his own, as I infer he has, because five hundred pounds' are stiffish——"

"Do go on, father."

"If I'm a little too candid for your liking, you've only yourself to blame, my dear. It is obvious to any man who knows his world what the chap's game is."

"Do explain it to me, as one man who knows another."

"You know it perfectly well already, Rosa."

"Do tell me, father, do you judge other men by your own standard? Is that what your game would be?"

"'Pon my soul, Rosa! I think I'll go, my dear girl. It isn't often a pretty woman falls into this humor. She's generally got something better to do. But when she does—well, she'd better sit down by herself and get over it."

"You've been talking most virtuously to me about the conventions, but you seem perfectly *au fait* with the most immoral schemes."

"Immorality—for men—is one of men's conventions, and I don't think it'll hurt you to know it," said Cyril.

"I have known it for some time, dearest," said Rosa. "But now I'll tell you something, shall I?"

"Yes," said Cyril. "Do tell me. It would be nice to be told something just once."

"This loan is to be arranged through lawyers in the most businesslike way, and X is charging the usual six per cent interest."

"Dirty dog!" said Cyril.

Instead of laughing, she became suddenly angry.

"What do you mean now?"

"I've lent money to women who wanted it, but, 'pon my word, I've never expected to have it back, much less charge the poor, dear souls interest for it! The greasy usurer!"

The girl became quiet.

"I've told you too much, perhaps," she said. "You're not interesting yourself in my plans, and I don't ask you to. I'll just ask to be let alone."

"You can't be let alone. You don't

suppose this Jew fella will let you alone?"

"He isn't a Jew."

"He's as bad as one. I dunno what to do."

"Don't worry."

"It's my duty to worry, Rosa."

"Oh, father! I've never known you so pathetically set upon doing your duty before."

"You've never before given me such anxiety. Rosa, I insist—*insist*—upon this man's name. And I'll go and see him. Yes. I'll actually go and see him."

"You can insist till the cows come home, and then you won't get it."

"Well—I—am—I am—I am—amazed!" said Cyril, and he walked out.

The girl leaned back into the puffy chair. She closed her eyes and relaxed her muscles, which, during most of the interview, had been tense with a strange excitement. She snuggled back and down. She was so tired that she was too lax to get up and throw off the narrow white frock; it crumpled like a rag. No matter. Completely restful, she grew dreamy. In a half dream, a snatch of music came to her across a shining floor. She floated across the shining floor in Rutherford's arms under inverted pink bowls of light. They moved together like one dancer; sensation was exquisite.

And then, suddenly, it was all shattered by the housemaid entering, the noise of the curtain rings being drawn along the pole. Rosa opened her eyes. The room was bright with electric light under yellow shades.

"How long have I been here?" she wondered. The maid was pouring out hot water.

"Get me my black wrapper, please," said Rosa.

The maid brought it.

"I will have a tray up here," said Rosa.

It was brought. She wanted hours and hours and hours to herself in which to think and dream.

CHAPTER VI.

Cyril telephoned Wyngate the next morning. "If you can call at the club," he said, "I'll be there about twelve." Wyngate could and did.

The young man was still intently occupied, to the exclusion of all else, with the problem of Rosa. His first words, after they had settled into two club chairs, were: "Has she said anything more to you about me? I saw my aunt last night—"

"Yes, she's said more than a bit about you, Cox," Cyril replied. "But it wasn't to much purpose; or at least to such silly purpose it doesn't count. I told her. 'Damn' silly,' I called it. Girls seem to treat a man's judgment with amusement, though. Yes, little devil, she was amused."

Cox sighed.

"She's full of a lot of theories," said Cyril. "They won't carry her through life. They never have carried a woman through life yet."

"No," Cox muttered.

"What she's gettin' at I don't quite understand," Cyril went on. "But whatever it is, she's takin' it seriously. As seriously, that is, as a woman ever does take things."

"It mayn't last," said Cox hopefully.

"My dear lad! Last? A girl's whims never last; but she can get into a lot of mischief in the short while she's indulgin' 'em."

Cox opened his eyes sharply upon Cyril. Anxiety and jealousy flashed into them. "Yes, yes," he said uneasily. "But just what has she done?"

"Taken a shop."

"Taken it? She hasn't let the grass grow—"

"There's a man in this business, my lad."

A dark flush went all over Cox's good-looking face, from his collar to his hair. "M." He opened his cigarette case, offered it, and helped himself, all leisurely, but with a hand that shook a little.

"A man she met in France," Cyril added.

"Rutherford!" said Cox, leaping straight to the sore point.

"Who's Rutherford, my dear lad?"

"A fella," said Cox with faint contempt, "one of my corporals."

"Pon my soul!" said Cyril.

For a moment each man sat thinking his own thoughts.

"Gentleman?" said Cyril. "There were some—Tommies all through the campaign."

"Never had occasion to notice him," said Cox crisply.

"I should have liked to gather some idea of him," said Cyril. "However," he added tranquilly, "never mind. I don't suppose she'd have—taken at all—to an absolute outsider—but women are awfully queer over these things. You get 'em in a mood sometimes when they profess that none of the minor decencies matter a hoot. Sometimes it's a man's morals and sometimes a man's boots that they plump for. Still, that's beside the point. What I wanted to tell you this morning is: Rosa's taken this shop in Knightsbridge; and she's borrowed five hundred pounds from this chap, whoever he is, to do it with."

"My God!" exclaimed Cox, incredulously.

Cyril continued: "She tells me it's all arranged as a formal matter of business, through lawyers, and that he is chargin' her six per cent, as usual."

"Is he a money lender then?"

"No. An architect. Was this Rutherford an architect in civilian life?"

"I don't know. Never noticed him, I tell you, except—well, there he was, doing his job as well as most."

"We'll find that out," said Cyril.

"Boy, get me a directory," he added to a page who was passing. When it came he glanced over it, then looked up, "Rutherford & Sexton, Architects, Pall Mall. 'Got 'm!" he said with a finger on it.

"Oh," said Cox, trying to affect nonchalance, "it all hangs together. She told me about meeting Rutherford in France; she tells you an architect she met in France lent her this money; we look it up; Rutherford's an architect. It all hangs together. Question is: Are you doing anything?"

"I suppose I oughter see him, perhaps?"

"We might drop in now."

"Poor lad! Very eager!" thought Cyril. "I know." With a reminiscent half smile he slapped the directory together. "I'll telephone first," he added. And he went off, leaving Cox sitting there, seething with miserable anger.

Cyril returned after ten minutes.

"Mr. Rutherford's secretary," said he with a smile, "replies that he will see me at a quarter to one. It took some time, and I had to give my name, and make a sorter favor of it, by Jove! I think this fella must have a pretty fair business, Wyngate, my lad."

"Probably; why shouldn't he?" Cox replied with scorn.

"I s'pose," said Cyril, "if Rosa had asked you, you wouldn't have lent her the money."

"I wouldn't have dreamed of it. You don't suppose—come, Loftus—you don't suppose any man who loves a girl like I love Rosa is going to the pains of making her independent enough to snap her fingers at him."

"That's it!" said Cyril. "This independence is the devil."

They got their hats and sticks.

Rutherford did not keep them waiting a moment. They were shown directly into his presence and found him standing to receive them. To the elder man he said, "Mr. Loftus?" and held

out his hand. That handshake over, he looked beyond Cyril with a slight lift of his brows and a half smile at Cox. Wyngate, who had impeccable manners, nodded, though he would have liked just to stare frostily at the fellow. "Ah, Rutherford," he said, not evading his share of the mutual recognition.

"Morning, Cox," Rutherford replied.

That was almost more than Wyngate could stomach graciously. After all, the man had been one of his corporals; and now—one didn't know who he was at all. Any cad could go to a good tailor—to do so was probably a matter of business. A film of frost covered him as he sat down in the chair Rutherford indicated.

Rutherford knew all about it; but his face was perfectly grave as he turned to Cyril.

"How," he inquired promptly, "is Miss Loftus?"

Cox stared.

"My daughter? Very well, I think, thanks," said Cyril blandly. "However, I understand you've seen her lately yourself."

"Yesterday afternoon."

"Had a little dancing, I understand. My daughter enjoys it."

"One comes back to find London dance crazy," said Rutherford.

"Staggering boom in every kind of amusement," replied Cyril.

Rutherford allowed a pause to elapse. Cox dusted a shoe tip with a silk handkerchief.

"As a matter of fact, Mr. Rutherford," said Cyril, who could not allow any awkwardness to endure, "it is on my daughter's behalf that I've come to see you this morning."

"You also, Cox?" said Rutherford, cordially smiling.

Cox stuttered.

"Cox," said Cyril, "is—interested, naturally. Er—he hasn't quite given

his approval to this scheme any more than I have."

"I rather gathered from Miss Loftus," answered Rutherford, "that she was dispensing with approval."

Cox stuttered.

"Did you, indeed?" said the bland Cyril. "So she is, in a way. But all the same, it's really my duty as her father—she's no mother living"—a slight seriousness invested his manner—"it's my duty, I say, to learn a little of what she's doing."

"I haven't Miss Loftus' permission to tell you anything," Rutherford remarked.

"My dear fella!" said Cyril. "My very dear fella! You don't suppose my little girl keeps me in the dark like that! She tells me you have made her a loan."

"A trifling one."

"Glad you can think of five hundred pounds in trifling terms, Mr. Rutherford!"

"Well, it won't break the bank, sir."

"No. No. But I don't care to have my daughter indebted to you for even this sum."

"There is no question of debt. It is an ordinary loan taken up in the ordinary way. If you care to drop in on my lawyers, or on the lawyer I have recommended to Miss Loftus, you'll find everything in order. As far as I am concerned, they have my permission to show you anything relating to the business."

"You're very frank; very nice over it, I'm sure," said Cyril, slightly at a loss.

"There is no question of anything but frankness," Rutherford returned.

"Exactly," Cyril murmured. "Exactly."

"Now, if you care to get to the point of your call—" said Rutherford, courteously interrogating.

Wyngate Cox intervened, slightly hectoring.

"We're there, Rutherford, we're

there! The point has been explained. We—do—not—care—to—have—Miss—Loftus—indebted—to—you.”

“Are you in this business, Cox?” said Rutherford like lightning.

“Certainly. Of course,” Cox replied doggedly.

Rutherford leaned back. He smiled. His light gray eyes, with a steely quality in them, met Cox’s full, and then Cyril’s.

“Miss Loftus’ father naturally feels concerned,” he said, “but officially, I cannot admit the inclusion of either of you. It is just a business matter between Miss Loftus and myself.”

“Don’t take that tone, Rutherford!” Cox replied sharply.

Rutherford looked at him, and his look said: “You are sitting in my chair in my office.”

“Oh, well, Wyngate——” said Cyril. Wyngate rose. He leaned on the mantelpiece.

Cyril turned to Rutherford. “It is not too late to withdraw your loan, if the lawyers are only just fixing it up. Between ourselves, I tell you that my daughter is sure to make a mess of things; and you’ll lose your money.”

“I don’t think it,” said Rutherford positively.

Wyngate gave him a long, narrow look.

Rutherford got up, leaned against his desk, and put his hands in his pockets. He itched to be at Cox. And while he was choosing his next words, and keeping himself quiet by the impost of a few moments’ silence, Cox’s look wavered and traveled away, and Rutherford saw it light on the photograph of the girl who signed herself “Blanche.”

Wyngate’s look lighted on it and fixed. His mouth and chin set. A sort of quietude dropped over him.

Rutherford turned abruptly to Cyril, who rose to his feet and faced him, with an idea that the other man had

something to say which would be more fittingly faced, standing. The idea was right. Rutherford broke out:

“You two have come here this morning expecting to find a dirty cad taking advantage of a girl’s ignorance over business matters, haven’t you? I know what you expect of me. And if you put any thought of that kind into her head——”

Cyril raised a hand.

“Of course I have put it into her head. She needs some sort of sense drummed into her.”

“She has all the sense she needs as far as I am concerned,” said Rutherford hotly. “I met your daughter in France, sir, where I admired her grit; I meet her again in town where I admire her grit. I’m only too honored to make this trifling accommodation, which I have put on a business footing merely for the purpose of answering suspicions like yours. To fellows like you any idea of comradesly feeling between men and women is impossible. But the men who fought in France and the women who worked in France understand it all right—— If you really haven’t anything to say, and have only come to take a look at me, for God’s sake, look, and get it over! Excuse my mentioning that I have a lunch appointment.”

“I am aware of it,” said Cyril, ever bland. “I heard it made over the telephone this morning.”

“Rosa!” exclaimed Wyngate.

“M,” said the imperturbable Cyril.

“I’d hate to keep Miss Loftus waiting,” Rutherford added.

“Pon my word!” Wyngate cried, “this is a damn’ sight too thick, Loftus. Stop it!”

Rutherford’s eye traveled over Cox, and from him to the portrait on the mantelpiece; Cox followed his eye sharply. Then the two men looked at one another. The look expressed nothing at all but a flashing inquiry. Cox

was the first to turn away. With an air of positive outrage, slowly he drew out a cigarette case of extraordinary thinness, lighted a cigarette, and tucked the case away again. All his actions were portentous, as if he were on the eve of making something happen, something pretty big; but nothing transpired.

Rutherford smiled.

"We're keepin' you," said Cyril. "It's no use stayin' here, Wyngate. Pretty fruitless—pretty fruitless. But when you say, 'Stop it,' how the devil d'you think it's to be done?"

Cox stepped near Rutherford.

"Look here," he said, "you know perfectly well you've got no business asking Miss Loftus to lunch—being seen about with her."

"Are you going to marry Miss Loftus?"

"Yes," said Wyngate.

"During yesterday's conversation she informed me quite otherwise. Perhaps there are other reasons why you think Miss Loftus should not honor me with her acquaintance."

"The ordinary social ones; the decencies to which she has been brought up," said Wyngate haughtily.

Rutherford stared and laughed.

"You silly fool!" he said, opening the door.

"Thanks, Rutherford!" said Cox ferociously, passing him.

"'Mornin', Mr. Rutherford," Cyril added. As they went out together he spoke with an air of relief.

"Nothing to be done, Wyngate. Nothing to be done. See that, don't you? You own I've done my best? Couldn't have done more, could I? The girl must go her own way, and may she like it when she's found it. I think I'll leave her alone for a goodish while—two or three months; it'd be wise tactics. Come and lunch, Wyngate."

"Lunch? Think of Rosa lunching with that cad!"

"Call him a cad?"

"What do you call him?"

"Good enough sort of merchant."

"It's all rotten," said Cox, "absolutely rotten."

"Come and lunch."

"I'm thinking of Rosa." They turned into St. James' Square, and headed for Cyril's club.

Cyril had a kind heart, full of decent gratitude. He meant to cheer Cox up and do him well, for after all, the young man had been a regular son-in-law already—all the toil and none of the reward! Cyril took him and fed him well and winned him exquisitely, and told him stories, sly, bland, delicate stories, peculiarly his own. And he looked out through the open windows at the trees in the square, where the birds were singing, and at the blue of the May sky, and he heard the soft rush of many cars mostly heading for the great Automobile Club near by. "Good world!" thought Cyril. The good world was doing him excellently at present, save for his passing perplexities about his girl.

"Must get a few women to help," he thought. "The duchess won't fail me; and that sweet Frenchwoman; I wonder?" If the Countess Lavallière returned to Paris in the autumn, he thought he'd run over frequently; perhaps know her better. She must be—oh, something in the early forties; an interesting age in an interesting woman. Yes, the countess might give him sympathy over Rosa. He'd call and see, anyway; ask her if she wouldn't like to drive down to Ranelagh or something. As for Rosa—she receded in his mind; but returning to her, he decided: Get a few nice women to look after her and to sympathize with him; shut her up in her shop and leave her there.

It might be a huge success. He might, to all practical purposes, not have a daughter any more; or at least,

a daughter off his hands, as good as married.

In this sun he began basking; he warmed himself. He wished poor Cox, poor young fellow, were feeling a bit more genial.

"When we were in that fella's room, Wyngate," he said, "did you notice a photograph of a girl on the mantel-shelf?"

"What was she like?" said Cox.

"A most arrestin' face. A wonderful girl, I should think. You didn't notice it?"

"I think I noticed there was a photo there," said Cox.

"You shouldn't ever miss the good things," said Cyril seriously.

"I'm thinking about Rosa."

"Pity, pity," said Cyril. "It's never worth really moping—not that I'd rob any young man of his miseries. I'm a little beyond 'em myself, but you—enjoy 'em while you may."

"Enjoy!" glared Wyngate.

"It'll soon be over," said Cyril. "Good things always are. But there's this about life; that one good thing always comes on top of t'other. It's a wonderful world."

And he listened to the singing of the birds with a half smile on his mouth.

"Wonder where he's taking her!" said Wyngate.

CHAPTER VII.

Half a dozen times a day Rosa was in the little shop, during the next week, watching decorations grow, with an ecstatic eye. Once during the week the duchess and her charming French friend made rendezvous with her there, and stepped from her grace's limousine into the dismantled place with a perfect affectation of interest and enjoyment. The duchess had a great axiom: "If a woman means to be silly, she'll be silly. Let the poor thing alone and she'll get over it. But whatever you

do, don't save her from herself; for herself is her only salvation!" She explained this to Wyngate, and this was the course she adopted with Rosa. She impressed it on the countess, who repeated it to Cyril as they sat together in the Ritz, overlooking the green park, like a fairyland with the May trees blossoming. Cyril solaced himself a great deal during these afflicted days with the dark-eyed Marie.

"After all," said the countess, "after all, my dear friend, there is nothing very *outré* in originality. Girls may be original now."

"If it's nothing worse than originality," said Cyril. "Seems more like original sin to me," he added.

"Even that," said the countess, "is countenanced if attractive."

"What would you do," asked Cyril, the pathetic, "if you had a daughter? A most unsuitable thing to happen," he added.

"I would love a daughter," said the countess.

"She would be out of the picture."

"Ah," said the countess, "now you have spoken! Men like to put women into frames and keep them there. How they hate them to step out! They must be pictures—pictures all the time. A pleasant rôle, hanging in a frame before an admiring crowd; but sometimes—what a joy to jump out, like your Rosa has done!"

"She should jump back and marry Cox."

"I'm sure," said the countess reflectively, "that he would make a dull husband."

"Would I?" asked Cyril.

"You!" said the countess, "you wouldn't make a husband at all."

"You're quite right," said Cyril. "All the same," he added, "I was one once. Hence Rosa and all my worries and troubles."

"How nice!" said the countess, "how nice to possess worries and troubles at

your age! Now my life is just a placid sea on a waning afternoon. No worries; no troubles; no turbulence at all. It is just smooth, smooth all the time!"

"Placidity is essential for women. It keeps them beautiful."

"It turns them to stone. I envy your Rosa with all this new world before her."

"All this new world, through which she seems to be going in very mixed company!"

"All the better fun," said the countess, sighing.

And then, a day or two after this, the little shop was completed. Suddenly, one morning, it was beautiful and white and whole; with panels of purple striping the walls, and a purple carpet, with a pile like moss, on the floor. That morning, Rosa was late in bed; she had been dancing half the night with Wyngate, who liked to separate her from what he called her squalor, on every possible pretext. So she had gone with him to Carlton's; they had danced inexhaustibly, and had had supper there just as the first beam of dawn was filtering through the warm streets. At Carlton's night and day were the same; lit alike by the rosy light in the inverted pink bowls. About three they came out to where Wyngate's car was waiting.

As they drove through streets now almost deserted save for the cleaners already at work, Wyngate took Rosa in his arms and kissed her. She had known he would. Again he begged her, keyed up with passion, to marry him, and again she refused. But he made so fierce an onslaught on her determination that she was physically weary when she reached home, crept upstairs, and closed the door of her room upon herself.

"He doesn't care," she thought, "he doesn't care—if he can only get me."

That aspect of man's passion, at once repugnant and fascinating to women,

had no thrill for her, however; Wyngate had tired her too much. She dropped her clothes off in a heap; dropped herself into bed, and slept; but before she slept she half-dreamed, for a brief instant, of Rutherford.

He seemed to her a very strong man; a very patient man. For some reason his patience remained before her as if it took a tangible shape. "He'd be very patient," she thought; then caught herself back, in drowsy contempt of herself, and forced her brain to repose. So, Rutherford being the last thought in her mind before sleeping, it seemed striking that his should be the first intrusion on waking. As she lay half asleep, at ten of a lovely morning, her bedside telephone rang. Sleepily she answered it.

"Yes. This is I. Rosa Loftus—Oh, Mr. Rutherford!"

His voice came: "You haven't a milliner, you told me; I have found a splendid one for you, I think. Will you try her, anyway?"

"Oh, rather! Rather, Mr. Rutherford! How wonderful you are!"

"No. She dropped, as it were, into my hand. Now she would like to eat from yours. I've told her all about you—the sweetest things about you! Will you pay her three pounds a week?"

"Of course! Of course! Can people live on that?"

"Can people live on that! Can they not! I'll talk to you one day about it. When shall she come? Do you want an interview? And where?"

"She can interview me at my darling little shop this morning at twelve; for *it's ready!* Hullo—can you get at her to tell her so?"

"I'll ring her up now. She'll come."

"Oh, you'd better give me her name."

"Duplessis." He spelled it.

"Thank you," said the sleepy but radiant Rosa, "wish me luck!"

"With all my heart I wish you all the luck in the world."

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"Good-by— Good-by."

Rosa stepped from her taxi a little before twelve at the locked door of "Rosa's," in Knightsbridge. She entered and looked around. She felt immeasurably eager, fit to conquer the whole world of trade. She had carried through the project. In spite of Cyril and Wyngate, the duchess, inexperience, and soft temptations, she had carried it through. Her cheeks burned softly. She sat down on top of a low white chest which soon should be filled with hats—*such* hats! dreams, graces, coronations!—and tried the mossy pile of her carpet tenderly with her parasol tip. It was thick! All was absolutely lovely.

The door opened. A girl came into the empty shop. Rosa lifted her head and looked; her smile of inquiring greeting was wiped from her face as if with the sweep of a cold hand. Tall, lissom, rounded, with a web of hair over dark eyes, under a French hat, she saw Blanche.

Blanche smiled, slowly. She had a curious smile, very hesitating, without warmth. Her dark eyes were guarded.

"Miss Loftus?" she murmured.

"Miss Duplessis?" said Rosa.

"Mr. Rutherford told me——"

"Yes. He rang me up this morning."

They stood and looked at one another.

Rosa did not know why she subjected Blanche to such a survey except that Blanche was looking at her, too; and Blanche, perhaps, would not have given the other girl so close a scrutiny had not Rosa begun to take her in, to draw her in, to sweep her in, to this sort of intense personal examination. But now, after the long look was over, with all its lights and shades, hints, and subtle withdrawals, each sprang suddenly on her guard.

"You can make hats?" said Rosa, smiling.

"I have made hats ever since I could sew. I made this one I have on."

"It's lovely!"

"It cost four shillings."

"Four shillings!"

"But mademoiselle could charge four guineas for it, in Knightsbridge."

"I think I am going to get very rich, with you to help me," said Rosa with an affected little laugh.

"We will see," said Blanche. "That is, if you engage me."

"I should certainly like to engage you," said Rosa, digging, but no more tenderly, at her pile carpet, and still looking straight at Blanche.

The other began to comment with an air of business.

"You have no stock?"

"Not yet."

"In three days I can make enough to begin with; for the window and showroom; then, we shall take orders."

"Yes?" said Rosa, looking at her full.

Blanche smiled; she had a lovely way of slightly lifting and slightly drooping her shoulders. "The initial outlay," she continued—she had a very charming foreign accent—"need not be great. Are you thinking of laying in some materials to-day, mademoiselle? Then I could begin work at once."

"I had thought of it," replied Rosa, her brain a blank.

"Shall we go together now, this morning?" Blanche suggested.

"I wonder if I have enough money with me," murmured Rosa, and opening her bag she began to count notes; ten. Blanche smiled again.

"That is a great deal of money. We shall not want half."

Guided by Blanche, Rosa entered many shops where she had never set foot before; not small, quiet places where only soft sounds were heard and the outside world seemed not to permeate, but long large buildings, rambling into many departments, where

hundreds of women shifted about and jostled one another; and where most of the girls behind the long counters were pale, and shabbily gowned in spite of the sophistication with which they managed to wear their clothes. Here Blanche descended into bargain basements; sorted over baskets of odd lengths piled up on counters; and found hopeful material in scraps for which Rosa would have declared no use. The French girl bought shrewdly; she did not waste a sixpence; she bought with the ardor and calculating care of one to whom sixpences were sixpences and rather more if possible. She was patient and did not flag. All the while Rosa could not refrain from watching her; listening to the attractive accent of her voice with the many modulations, and noting with reluctant admiration that lovely rise and droop of her shoulders that was hardly a shrug, as she discussed or argued, with the anæmic girls behind the counters, the merits of this or that bargain length.

It was Rosa who first murmured, "Lunch?"

"There is a lunch room here," replied Blanche, buying.

Rose looked around her and thought of her comfortable club; and then she thought: "Clubs! I shan't be able to afford to eat in mine very often. This will suit me better; a sandwich in the intervals of bargain hunting." So she went with Blanche to the lunch room already crowding with jaded shoppers, and they ordered scrambled eggs and coffee. All the while they ate and drank, the two girls perfected their summary of each other, and the thoughts that ran in both heads were extraordinarily similar.

Rosa thought: "So this is Blanche! And he sent her to me! Why?"

The French girl was deep in meditation: "So this is the Englishwoman! Chic; pretty; rich. Yes. Perhaps it is no wonder——"

Aloud, laying her hand on the parcel, she uttered sweetly, "We have been very fortunate this morning, mademoiselle, you and I."

Rosa said suddenly: "I shall have to go home now."

Blanche said: "And I will make the hats."

Outside the big crowded shop they parted. Blanche mounting one omnibus, Rosa another. Rosa arrived home about mid afternoon.

Cyril was out; there were no letters; only a telephone message from Wyn-gate, saying he would call about four, and hoped to find her in. In her present mood this was sufficient to send her out again. She stood for a few moments in the hall, thinking what she should do. And calling a servant, she said obstinately:

"Tell Mr. Cox when he calls that I'm sorry I have to go out again. I'm going to Knightsbridge. If you tell him that he'll understand."

She decided to go back to Blanche and the hats.

All the way to Knightsbridge she thought over Blanche, point by point. The girl was more alluring by far than her photograph promised. Though she was pale, her whole personality seemed full of color; though she was thin as a board, her whole contour seemed drawn in gracious lines. And her eyes, wistful, calculating, wise—they were marvels. Rosa wondered things about her; her age, her life, the secret of her spell. For a spell the French girl undoubtedly possessed. It was evident even to the reluctant eyes of another girl. And had she cast it over Rutherford?

What should Rutherford have to do with Blanche or Blanche with Rutherford?

"Other people's lives are very interesting to speculate about," said Rosa to herself with a false, detached air.

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by the time she was explaining away to herself her own perturbation, and she descended. She opened the door of the little shop, across the empty windows of which were drawn discreetly short, mauve curtains, and entered.

On the low, white chest sat Blanche, a turban growing under her white fingers. She was biting off a length of thread, and laughing. Her eyes were pools for ripples of laughter; her mouth had the seductive demureness of the born coquette. Near her, hat and stick in hand, stood Rutherford.

CHAPTER VIII.

On the threshold Rosa paused, with a swell about her heart which affected her throat. A wave of heat passed over her body. It was extraordinary and stupid—this anger of her's. It was entirely unreasonable. And then, all in a moment, she found herself unnaturally calm, cool, and composed.

Her first coherent thought had been, "I wonder if she telephoned him! Said where she was to be found; and that she'd be alone?"

She stepped forward; Blanche saw her first, and standing with the hat poised triumphantly at arm's length, cried: "See, mademoiselle!" Then Rutherford turned round.

Rosa was blind to the lighting of her face; she was deaf to all but the receding surge of her own anger. "You're working hard!" she said in a few moments, during which silence descended on all three, each waiting for the others to speak. "Good afternoon, Mr. Rutherford."

Blanche, retiring to the chest, sank down upon it again, drooped her eyelids and sewed as if for dear life. She withdrew herself from the conversation.

"What a surprise!" said Rosa.

"Is it?" said Rutherford. "My sur-

prise was not to find you here, working your fingers to the bone. I dropped in, hoping to see you."

Blanche, with drooped eyelids, sewed.

Rosa could not refrain from shooting a quick glance at the French girl. She seemed to read into the lowly bend of her head, meek droop of her eyes, faint laughter. She was amused—she must be amused—at the prompt, transparent lie.

"Did you really?" said Rosa.

"Really!" asseverated Rutherford.

Rosa smiled.

"You are pleased with everything?" said Rutherford.

"Delighted," smiled Rosa.

"Won't you come and have tea somewhere?" said Rutherford, delighting his eyes with the sight of her in her narrow white gown.

"Thanks; but we can make tea here. We shall, every day." Blanche commenced to look round for the apparatus.

"The dearest little spirit stove and kettle; and look at my china!" said Rosa with a sort of willful gayety, pulling open a little cupboard in the wall. Blanche got up and undulated obligingly toward it, while Rutherford fussed with matches; and Rosa stood by with her hands on her parasol top. A sense of restraint girdled all three.

Blanche, with graceful humility, set out three cups and saucers.

"There's a full moon, and delightful weather," said Rutherford, drawing near Rosa; "didn't you say something about dining out of town and motoring back by moonlight, one day?"

"Your idea," said Rosa.

"Will you do it?" said Rutherford.

Rosa looked at the slender black back of Blanche a little stooped over her tea making on the white chest, and a sense of fierce rivalry seized her. "I'd love it," she replied deliberately.

"When?" said Rutherford.

"I suppose almost at once unless we wait for the next moon," replied Rosa.

"Oh! that won't do at all!" said Rutherford. "May we do it to-morrow? The next day? The day after that?"

"The day after to-morrow. Thanks," said Rosa deliberately.

Blanche turned about.

"I have made the tea str-r-rong," said she sweetly.

Rosa sat down on the white chest; Blanche poised herself with a suggestion of deference at the other end. Rutherford stood before the two girls, thinking: "I wonder what's wrong now? Surely she's the fine, frank, understandable girl I've thought her? What are these moods?" He grew quiet, puzzling over Rosa.

Rosa talked to Blanche conversationally about hats.

"To-night," said the French girl, "I make two more. Those, and this one, they will be three. To-morrow I shall start early, and make half a dozen; three for the window, with a veil or two, and a flower or two; six for the counter. On those we can begin; we shall mostly make to order; the hats on view will be models—our new models!" Her voice broke on a tiny gulp. "Mon Dieu!" she breathed.

The door had opened and a man had entered. In a moment Blanche added swiftly: "A client? We are not open, monsieur. We——"

"Wyn!" said Rosa.

Wyngate, surely the most perfectly tailored man in town, stood there, nodding to Rutherford, greeting Rosa, his eyes fixed on Blanche.

The French girl drooped her eyelids.

Wyngate switched his look away like switching off an electric current. "Quite a tea party!" he began in a rather hesitating voice. "May it include me?"

"I was just going home, Wyn," said Rosa. "You make take me there."

Wyngate, with an air of shouldering the others to one side that in a man of worse manners would have been an unforgivable rudeness, turned and addressed himself exclusively to her.

"They told me you'd come here, Rosa, so I followed. I wanted to see you. I wanted to know if you'd dance to-night? My aunt has an affair on—a small one—and you were away when the invitations went out. She wants me to bring you. Do come, Rosa. She's got a nigger band. It'll be worth dropping into for an hour or so. You look pale. Are you tired?"

"A little."

"All this rot!" said Cox, glancing angrily around the shop.

"Admire it, Wyn."

"If I must, I must," said Cox. "Charming! exquisite! I congratulate you."

"You sound murderous."

"That is how I feel," said Cox. "Do let's get away."

The French girl, her back turned to them, took up the turban again, and sewed as if for life.

"Am I allowed to light a cigarette here?" said Rutherford in a voice that rang rather forcedly quiet and even.

"Of course," Rosa replied. She turned wholly to the other. "You were very nice to come and fetch me, Wyn."

Rutherford smiled wryly, lighting his cigarette.

"I wanted to persuade you about this dance," said Cox brusquely. "Will you come?"

"I'd love it."

"I'll fetch you at nine thirty."

"You'd better dine with us first."

"With you, you mean. Your father is dining with my aunt and the countess." A smile of understanding passed between Wyngate and Rosa.

Rutherford saw the smile of mutual comprehension. There is nothing more maddening in a triangular situation, than just this smile. He stood there,

quiet, absent, meditative—and seething, as Rosa had seethed.

"Dine with me, then."

"Of course, I'd love that."

"At eight."

"Splendid!" said Cox, shifting his feet and hovering near the door. He implored her by a look to come away.

She dug at the carpet viciously. "Good-by, Mr. Rutherford," she flung over her shoulder.

"Good-by, Miss Loftus," said Rutherford, rousing himself from what appeared to be a reverie.

"Good afternoon, Miss Duplessis," Rosa added.

The French girl turned round slowly. Her mouth smiled. Her dark eyes were blank. "Good afternoon, mademoiselle," she replied.

"You look awfully white," said Rosa, pausing.

"The first hot weather," breathed the French girl, "a little trying, mademoiselle. It is nothing."

"I hope not," said Rosa in a chilly voice that could not be kind in spite of the dictates of her heart. She lingered, and looked at them both; and then at Cox, who, with averted eyes, was impatiently holding the door. She wheeled abruptly and went out, leaving the other girl with Rutherford.

Rutherford was thinking:

"Me, a moonlight drive; Cox, dinner and dance. The way a woman dispenses favors!" He thought: Had her brave, frank nature changed with her dress? Was she still the simple woman who had cried unashamedly in his arms on a dark road in France? What was she— Then, he heard the sound of a quick indrawn breath that was dangerously near a sob.

He looked at Blanche's slender black back as she stood before the opened cupboard, fumbling with something stupidly and blindly. The outline of her cheek was dead white; her breast heaved. He thought for a moment or

two, then went over and put a hand on her shoulder. She turned round and clung hard to his arm.

"Poor girl!" said Rutherford.

"So hard!" wept the French girl. "So hard!"

"I know," said Rutherford, looking down.

She clung to his arm, laughing a little, bitterly, through her tears.

Wyngate escorted Rosa home almost in silence. She was paler than usual, and preoccupied, so that she did not notice the curious perturbed glances he gave her, sidelong, from time to time. They just spoke fragmentarily of little things; the appearance of some car passing them, or a mutual acquaintance driving by to the park. Then Rosa was at home, saying good-by to Wyngate on the front doorstep. She did not want him to come in. This afternoon his assiduity pleased her, in the face of Blanche and Rutherford; all the same, she wanted to be rid of him. She had a perverse instinct to be quite alone. "Good-by, Wyn," she said, just touching his hand with her finger tips, "till eight."

He turned away, after an uneasy glance at her.

Rosa went straight upstairs to her haven, the white-and-purple room. Its colors soothed and charmed her. It was always restful; cool without being cold; warm without being hot; rich without being gilded; chaste without being hard. She sat down in a low chair near the dressing table, where she could see her face in the mirror. It was woman's flight to her looking-glass, after a score by a fancied rival. Had Blanche scored?

Did it matter what Blanche did? What Rutherford did? The throb of Rosa's heart answered her.

Again she fell to debate with herself about the occurrence of the afternoon. Vividly her brain reconstructed the

scene. The little empty white shop with the purple panels striping the walls; the low white chest on which the French girl sat, dutifully sewing, with her dark eyes drooped and that provocative pursing of the mouth so often seen in Frenchwomen; and Rutherford standing by, speaking.

What had he been saying?

It was likely that Blanche, reaching the shop, had gone straight to the telephone, and had said: "I am here; alone; making hats; come and see me." He had flown to her!

They had lost very little time in their meeting. Rosa commenced to reckon. She had been twenty minutes getting home; twenty minutes getting to Knightsbridge; why, Rutherford must have come on wings!

"However," said Rosa to herself, leaning back, crossing her knees, and swinging a foot like a pendulum, "it's not my business."

She had left them there together. Rutherford had made no move. They had the air of wishing to be left there together like that.

"Not my business," Rosa told herself airily.

Getting up presently, she threw herself into the business of being beautiful. She would be beautiful for Wyngate—or for any man but Rutherford. She had all her frocks—the pre-war ones, and one or two hurriedly bought—spread out on couch and bed, and she appraised them. Never had she taken such care; for she was in that sort of temper. When the housemaid came in with her hot water and the offer of assistance, she had made her decision, had changed her underwear for the fragmentary garments which the modern girl puts on for evening use; and was drawing on long silk stockings. What she was actually thinking was:

"I'll be a devil and wear that black!"

Wyngate, looking the correctest young man in town, was sitting pen-

sively in the drawing room, when Rosa came down. She was in that black; a creation which partly clung to her, and partly floated around her, which seemed to have flashes and spangles of diamond brilliance hidden about it, twinkling like rays of light when she moved. The frock was a dance frock, just as short as dance frocks could be worn. Her feet were in glove-fitting slippers weighted with huge buckles of brilliants. Directly he had looked at her, the young man realized her mood; the devil. And with a thrill he responded to it.

Her cheeks looked as if they were rouged, though they were not. She came close to him, looked at him with eyes of perilous softness, and murmured, "What a dear you are to me, Wyn." She gave forth very faintly, almost impalpably, some clinging, fragrant perfume.

The young man laughed headily. He stared.

"How beautiful you look, Rosa!"

They went in to dinner.

"How decent of your father to be dining out," said Wyngate.

"Yes," said Rosa.

He looked at her sharply.

She had said "Yes," intimating she was glad that they were alone.

"You like being alone with me, Rosa?"

"Don't be silly, old thing," she replied, with bright eyes.

Cyril's parlormaid, who knew everything about every one in the house, waited on them with a faintly smiling air. She had murmured to Cyril, as she held his overcoat for him in the hall: "Miss Loftus said Mr. Cox was dining here to-night, sir." And she and Cyril had smiled at one another. Cyril's look had asked: "What do you think of it all, you clever little girl?" and her's had replied: "Well sir—it may all come right in the end—" She hovered wisely about Rosa and

Wyngate. She remarked each inflection of the man's voice, and knew what it meant; and made herself scarce on some table errand, so that he might lean over and kiss Rosa's hand if he longed to. Directly Cox's voice expressed some such longing, the parlormaid faded. And each time, as she drew the door shut softly behind her, she compared Rosa philosophically with herself. The young lady might enjoy the charming lovemaking of a gentleman; the parlormaid, her tastes refined by many experiences, was doomed to the butcher, the baker, the candlestick maker.

"Gentlemen are no good to me," she thought, closing the door. But she knew that she preferred them all the same.

Her tact, perfect as it was, penetrated presently to Wyngate. "That's a wonderful servant, your parlormaid," he said to Rosa, smiling. And she replied, also smiling: "Isn't she clever?"

"Now," thought Wyngate, "what does she mean? She realizes what the maid's doing, and appreciates it? What does that mean? It can only mean——"

He suddenly put down his napkin, rose and bent over her. His hand touched her bare shoulder. "Rosa" he whispered. She looked up. "Let me kiss you before the maid comes back," he begged.

"Please don't, Wyn."

Wyngate looked at her hard, hesitated, and resumed his place. "I wish I knew if you really meant that," he said slowly.

"I wish I knew it myself," she replied deliberately. He sprang up again passionately, and she was ashamed of herself, for, in her wayward mood, she had been just trying him; and she cried: "I meant it."

He sat down again. "Presently," he thought.

"I suppose," she said, making conver-

sation as the parlormaid once more appeared, "that father will be dancing with the countess to-night."

"A very charming woman," said Wyngate.

"Isn't father wonderful?" said Rosa. "He'll never be old. He loves life too well."

Wyngate smiled. His eyes took on a reminiscent expression. "Yes," he replied guardedly.

"Do you think he'll marry again, Wyn?"

"Heavens, no!" said Cox, "why should he? I think he's damn' lucky as he is. And so, I expect, does he."

"What does that mean, Wyn? That marriage——"

"Well, marriage is a state most men like to avoid as long as possible, isn't it?" said Cox.

"Yet you ask me to marry you, Wyn."

The parlormaid was at the other end of the room.

"Because I want you so, Rosa," he replied low and passionately.

She looked down. "Oh—yes," she murmured. "Yes, Wyn."

"What do you mean by that 'yes,' Rosa?" he asked tenderly, but with a touch of uneasiness.

"I mean, I see. If I belonged to a different class—the class below our's, let us say—I suppose marriage wouldn't be the only way. As it is, you——"

"Good God, Rosa! Now, none of that. It's horrid."

"I mustn't be horrid. But let us suppose: If I were, say, oh, that girl I've engaged as milliner——"

"Ah! that girl!" said Cox in a sharper voice. His fingers suddenly twisted on his wineglass stem, and the fragile thing broke, and the wine spilled over the cloth.

"I'm sorry," he added.

The parlormaid approached swiftly, a napkin in her hand. "It will be quite all right, sir," she murmured confiden-

tially in his ear as she dabbed at the cloth. "I will bring you another glass." Again she disappeared, and the door closed behind her.

"Sheer clumsiness on my part," Cox declared.

"What does it matter, old thing?" said the girl, her elbows on the table, her chin in her palms. She put out a finger tip and played idly with a frond of fern among the roses in the silver bowl.

"What are you thinking of, Rosa?" asked Cox.

"Nothing. Nothing except that—I seem to be learning such a lot nowadays. Five years ago I never thought; I never speculated about reasons; about preferential treatment for girls——"

"And now you speculate a damn' sight too much," said Cox in a rather domineering tone that had the effect of being assumed to cover something else. "It's no good to you or to any woman. Accept your world as it is, Rosa, and take a man's word for it that it will be a pleasant one."

"I have begun thinking, Wyn, and I can't stop."

"You'll have to let some one take you in hand, and stop it for you."

She shook her head.

"Me for preference," said Wyngate softly, watching her.

She shook her head.

"What's the matter now?" said Wyn-gate.

"Something you said made me think."

"Something I said?" He began to cast back.

"I've forgotten what it was now, Wyn."

"Liar!" said Cox softly.

"You began to speak of my milliner, Wyn. That's put it out of my head."

"Oh, yes;" said Wyngate portentously. "That girl——"

The servant returned. She put the wineglass on the table and filled it. All

her gestures were delicate. She was really a pleasure to watch. Cox caught himself noting the turn of her wrist with a male delight in its prettiness. It was a wonderfully pretty hand for a maidservant; so well kept. "Daresay Loftus sees she has a soft job here," Wyngate thought. For a second his mind wandered off after Cyril and the parlormaid. Then Rosa was speaking again.

"What were you going to say, Wyn?" Cox paused. Deliberately he sipped his wine, and set his glass down and wiped his lips.

"Well?" said Rosa.

"Your milliner, Rosa, that French girl—she—she is a French girl?" said Wyngate, looking at the cloth.

"Yes. Blanche Duplessis—a pretty name; and Wyn, a very pretty girl, don't you think?"

"Not pretty, Rosa—at least, I really hardly looked at her."

"Curiously enough," said Rosa in a light voice, "I knew her by sight before I saw her. That isn't a riddle. Mr. Rutherford has her portrait on the mantelpiece in his office."

"Rutherford?"

"Yes. And he recommended her to me. That is how I found her."

"Rosa!" exclaimed Cox authoritatively. He paused and modulated his voice in answer to her quick stare. "It was a liberty, an insult," he said. "Rutherford had no right at all to send the girl to you."

"What do you know about them, Wyn?" said Rosa, playing with the fern-frond.

"About 'them?'"

"The Duplessis girl and Mr. Rutherford."

Wyngate checked his reply for some moments. A sort of light broke over his face.

"Well, Rosa," he said, "what should you suppose there is to know?"

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curiosity pervaded her whole body. She went on fingering the bit of fern. Wyngate sat forward, watching her face; and then her restless fingers.

Rosa uttered in a commonplace tone that did not deceive him: "Why—I'm not supposing anything. It doesn't matter to me, either."

"No," said Cox in a quiet and portentous voice that held worlds of meaning, "it does not matter to you, Rosa."

She was now determined to know.

"You must tell me, though, Wyn. I'm interested in a way——"

"I refuse to tell you, Rosa," replied Cox. He put finality into his voice, and leaned back in his chair.

"Ah, Wyn, do tell me."

"No," replied Cox positively.

The girl set her lips and a defiant half-smile flickered over them. She looked at Wyngate.

"I always feel an awful devil in this frock," she said.

"You look it," replied Wyngate with a cursory glance at the black shoulder-straps.

"He shall tell me," she thought.

The parlormaid came in, swept away crumbs with her delicate gesture, and set coffee cups before them. Cox opened the cigarette box, looking at Rosa.

He knew she was thinking: "I shall make him tell me."

"Let her make me," he thought. The blood beat up in his temples. "Sweet she is, the darling fool," he thought. He was possessed with a tremendous impatience; and yet he knew he must wait—— He was glad, of course, that she was a fool. He liked nice women to be fools.

The girl took a cigarette. There was wilfulness in the very way she took it, lighted it, held it between her red lips.

Cox smiled.

"What are you smiling at, Wyn?" said the girl, stretching out her hand over the table.

He took the hand, and kissed it finger by finger.

"You," he answered.

"You're going to answer my question, aren't you, Wyn?"

"What question?"

"About Miss Duplessis and Mr. Rutherford."

"No, Rosa."

"Why not?"

"I'm not going to tell you. Isn't that enough?"

"Perhaps it's far too much. Perhaps it makes me think——"

"Put it right out of your head."

"I'll make him tell me presently," she thought again.

They smoked their cigarettes with fitful intervals of talk. Wyngate kept looking at her and thinking: "I wonder what she'll do to make me?" The dining room was very quiet; and dim beyond the oasis of light on the table. Man and girl sat in the pool of light, each full of emotion, and surrounded by shadow. The pleasant parlormaid, had affairs been in her keeping, would have left them thus alone, illimitably.

"Father is thinking of letting this house, and taking bachelor rooms," said Rosa.

"And you?"

"I, of course, shall find my own rooms, too."

"When is all this to happen?" said Cox.

"As soon as possible. Perhaps at once——next week."

The news was not unpleasing to Cox. "How tired she'll get of it," he said to himself, "how she'll hate poverty and work and discomfort; she'll have it all, for I'll bet Loftus means to let her taste all three since she's so minded."

He fell to reflection, and calculation about dates. "She may last the season; a few women who know her may come in to buy hats and help her through; then'll come August, and desolation.

No money; she can't get out of town; besides, she can't leave the blasted shop. No accepting Aunt Anna's invitation for the shooting; no country houses. Off Loftus'll go. Off all her set'll go. She'll remain. What'll she do?"

He thought he knew.

Already he began to plan: He wouldn't be out of town the whole autumn; he'd come up frequently for two or three days, just to tell her what her friends were doing, and to see if she were getting jaded. Her pocket would be empty. She'd actually look forward to his coming up, taking her out to dinner, and dropping in to Carlton's or The Three Hundred after. Little ordinary things she'd had all her life would become regular treats. He imagined how she'd begin to look a little wistful, about October.

The parlormaid looked in delicately and regretfully. Standing just over the threshold, she breathed: "The car has just come round, miss," and withdrew to the hall to wait with Rosa's cloak over her arm. They went out to the car.

It was a short drive to the duchess' mansion in Park Lane. Wyngate, looking at Rosa through the dimness, judged her to be in rather a melting mood. She on her part, by the slightest incline of a shoulder, droop of her eyes, led him to think it. Her heart was still seething. He would have to tell her. She didn't care by what wiles she wormed it from him. Deliberately she gave him an impression of assailable nearness as she sat beside him in the car.

Wyngate's blood raced. He took her hand and fairly crushed it.

"I hate you, Wyn!" said Rosa softly, "I hate you! I hate you! I hate you!"

"Why?" whispered Cox, smiling.

"Because you're trying to mystify me about Miss Duplessis and Rutherford."

She was letting her hand remain in his.

"It's no good; I won't tell you," he replied promptly.

"Yes, you will," she uttered softly; coaxingly; but they were driving through brilliant Piccadilly, and Cox had to subdue the thrill running through him. He could not snatch her to him and kiss her.

They danced together for the greater part of three hours; left together about two o'clock. All the while she had been at her softest. She felt she must know what there was to know before she slept. Her craze to know grew every moment she was in Cox's arms, gliding with him over one of the most perfect floors in London. She did not see him; feel him; nor hear him. It was another voice she heard; other arms were round her; other eyes looked into her own. And she answered Wyngate softly; her look was brilliant; her laugh seductive. The duchess smiled on them very thoughtfully and meaningly; and he grew already proprietorially proud. Then at two o'clock they were together in the dark car in the dark streets.

"Can I take her in my arms?" Wyngate asked himself.

Even as he asked the question of himself, the girl seemed to droop a little toward him. His blood raced. He laid acquiring fingers on her arm, drawing her nearer. She spoke.

"Wyn, you are going to tell me?"

"Why do you so want to know?"

"Just—because I do."

"That's hardly good enough."

"Oh, Wyn, take anything I say as good enough."

He was drawing her against his shoulder. She was going to make a supreme effort to gain information; he felt that; and he seized the moment. He must turn it to his advantage.

"Anything you say is good enough for me, Rosa darling."

"Dear Wyn!"

With a hand cupping her chin, Cox

lifted her face and looked down upon it. It was so soft; warm and vivid as a peach ripened in the sun on a south wall. "Oh, Rosa! let me kiss you."

"Do as I want, Wyn."

"Then—will you?"

"If you'll tell me——"

"First, you tell me, dear. Why do you so want to know?"

"Perhaps I just want you to do as I want."

"If that's all, I'll do anything you want."

"Why shouldn't it be all?"

"I don't know. Rutherford is nothing to you."

He waited an impatient, whirling moment.

"Rutherford is nothing to you. Answer quickly."

"Nothing. Nothing. What should he be?"

"Oh, Rosa!" He kissed her.

As yet she hadn't got what she wanted. She let Wyngate hold her, and kiss her again and again. The young man was possessed by anticipations of triumph. He kissed her suffocatingly. Through it all, though he did not guess it, she remained aloof from him, only thinking of what she wanted. Nestling nearer him, making him gasp, she whispered, the first moment her mouth was free: "Now tell me! tell me! I didn't say you could kiss me first. Do what I want, Wyn. Tell me!"

"Rutherford is nothing to you!" he said again.

"Tell me, Wyn! Tell me!"

"Nearly home," was the passing impression on Cox's mind, as the car crossed Oxford Street. He felt her hands squeezing his shoulder imperatively.

"You've got to tell me now, Wyn."

"I can't tell you exactly, dearest. But——"

She grew very quiet in his arms.

"What's the matter, Rosa?"

"For God's sake, Wyn, speak out.

The matter? I—I—I'm just weary of asking you. That's all."

"Nearly home," thought Cox.

He searched his brain diligently.

"My dear little Rosa, you wouldn't be asking these questions if you really had any doubt. It's confirmation you want. I see that."

"Go on. Go on."

Cox searched his brain.

"I knew the girl—no; I knew of her—in France. It was at Abbéville. You know we were there?"

"Don't chat about your movements. Go on."

"Well—she—she met Rutherford at Abbéville, I believe."

"Well, Wyn, well?"

"God bless you, an officer doesn't conduct an inquiry into the heart affairs of his men. I s'pose they can go their own way. The girl——"

"The girl?"

"Should have looked after herself, I s'pose."

Around Rosa's heart bitterness made ice.

"You mean she didn't—look after herself—very successfully, Wyn."

"Don't see what you're driving at."

"Yes, you do."

"It is not a suitable matter——"

"Good God! do you take me for a child in arms——"

"A darling, darling girl in arms——"

"Oh, stop chatting, Wyn. About this girl——"

"Well, there were some pretty hot rumors——"

"About her——"

"About her and an English fellow."

"You mean Rutherford?"

"Look here, Rosa. There's a certain amount of honor among thieves; and men——"

"You want to cover it up for him. I like you for it. I like you better than I've ever liked you, for that, Wyn."

"Oh, Rosa! Darling!" He kissed her.

"You haven't finished telling me. I suppose he treated her badly. She looks as if some one had treated her badly."

"Does she, poor girl?" said Cox. "As for treating her badly, women's way of looking at things——"

"Yes. We have our own way of looking at things. Did he—did he—promise to marry her?"

"Why—why should he?" said Cox slowly.

"Because he ought to—if what I gather from you is true."

"You don't suppose I'd lie to you."

"You haven't really done anything. You've let me guess."

"I'd so much rather you guessed for yourself, Rosa. After all, you're not a child, as you say. And you are able to guess pretty right, no doubt."

"Yes. I've guessed."

"I'd rather not say any more, Rosa."

"You've said enough. Thank you for telling me, Wyn."

"Now think of sweeter things, dear."

"He's following her now, you see, Wyn. What brutes men are."

"Some men. Not all of us," he said plaintively.

"No, not all of you, thank God."

In the dimness Wyngate looked ahead of him, not at her tense face. A curious half smile hesitated on his lips. He stroked her hair and her neck, and kissed her.

"We're there," he whispered. "Good night."

In a quiet voice she replied: "Good night. The car will take you home, of

course. I've enjoyed dancing awfully." She fumbled at the lock with her latch-key.

"Let me," said Wyngate. When he had opened the door for her, he stood a moment, hesitating, looking into the hall; and the chauffeur waited.

"I'm tired, Wyn," said the girl. "I'm going up to bed at once."

He replied promptly: "Righto, dear. Good night."

He turned away obediently; and with a passionate hand she shut the door.

Alone in her room she sat in total darkness till dawn broke even through the closed blinds, so radiant it was.

It seemed to her as if hope had broken. It seemed to her that the ends and aims of life had disappeared into the dark, and that she did not know the way to follow them. All stars had waned. There was no moon. Dreams were shattered rudely. There was a taste of ashes; and aloes. So much for belief in man. And now, as she sat there, when Wyngate occurred to her vaguely, her reluctant thoughts of him were all kind. But chiefly, one picture blotted out the rest; the French girl on the low white chest, sewing, and Ruth-erford standing by. Huddled in the chair she lay, looking quietly into the dark. Only when light crept in more and more insistently did she rise to her feet with a weariness that surpassed any weariness she had ever known; and throwing off the black frock and the impalpable things beneath it, she dropped into bed.

TO BE CONTINUED.



MIRAGE

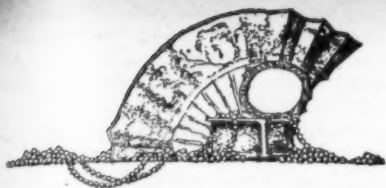
AT first I found no beauty in your face.

Love came, and then I saw that you were fair.

I marveled at love's wonder for a space,

Then woke one day to find no wonder there.

KATHARINE METCALF ROOF.



The Intruder

By Pauline Brooks

M ADELAINE HART possessed a trio of virtues—both passive and active. She was beloved by her husband; she was adored by a fluctuating quota of other men; she was a faithful wife. In her own heart—the last tribunal for a woman's virtue—she was triumphantly aware of her fidelity. As collateral security for her more passive achievements, she possessed beauty, magnetism and a subtle brain. Her wits were so agile and so trained that they kept for her a nice balance between the limitations and the possibilities of every one she encountered. Men found this unfailing adaptability as soothing as it is rare, her beauty whetted their desire, and each in turn envisioned himself as preordained to reach the unplumbed depths of her virginal nature. Disillusionment varied in kind and degree with the individual.

On a night in June, Madelaine gave a ball. Her appetite for social éclat was not jaded, and the success of her entertainment left her with an elation verging on excitement. It nearly effaced the disappointment of Anthony's absence, but not entirely, for Madelaine knew that the beauty and popularity of a married woman take on added luster against the background of a devoted and altogether eligible husband.

The last of her guests were speeding homeward and Madelaine had retired with her maid Janis to her bedroom. It was one flight up and its little balcony hung over a rose garden.

Janis was braiding Madelaine's hair when her mistress suddenly jerked her

head around and glanced toward the windows.

"Janis! There's some one walking in the garden! I heard the crunch of gravel."

Janis looked nervously over her shoulder.

"I heard nothing, madam."

"Well, I did."

"Perhaps it is Henry on his way to the lodge," said Janis doubtfully.

"Nonsense. Why should he walk around this wing of the house?"

"Madam is nervous? I will sleep on the lounge if madam wishes."

Madelaine impatiently disclaimed nervousness and dismissed her maid, announcing her intention of reading herself to sleep.

"Switch off the lights please, Janis; this droplight is enough. And latch the door. Good-night."

For a few seconds Madelaine read, then she yawned and stared into the semiobscurity of the room. She was sleepy but an unaccountable restlessness possessed her. She sauntered to the window and drew back one curtain a few inches letting in a flood of moonlight. For an instant she stood rigid, breathless, then slowly she turned and walked to the center of the room. Her manner was casual but the muscles of her mouth tightened. She crossed deliberately to the dressing table. Bending, she opened a drawer and took from it a revolver which she concealed in the folds of her negligee. In the same nonchalant manner she returned to the bed next to which was a telephone on a small stand. With a quick, deft

movement Madelaine sat on the edge of the bed; she clenched in her right hand the revolver; with her left she snatched the telephone receiver. Her eyes, brilliant with excitement, were fixed on the curtain of the window. Then into the transmitter she spoke with almost breathless energy.

"Central! Send police! Burglars! Yes, yes, quick!"

From behind the curtain quietly stepped a man. He was tall, very thin and dark, and he wore evening clothes, topped by a soft felt hat. Over his evening clothes he wore a summer overcoat. The corners of his lips were raised in a smile so faint that it was almost imperceptible. He met her eyes and slowly lifted his hand to his hat. Instantly Madelaine covered him with the revolver.

"Stop! Throw up your hands or I'll shoot!"

The man's faint smile became perceptible.

"I was merely going to remove my hat."

Very slowly he raised both arms above his head. His very coolness excited her.

"Keep still or I'll fire!" The last word came in a nervous crescendo.

"I am quite harmless." His tone was softly mocking. "I have not even a pocket knife on my person." His smile was now so pronounced as to be disconcerting. "So I beg you to permit me to lower my arms. I could not possibly remain in this position until the police arrive."

As she studied his face, a frown deepened between her eyes, and to her own surprise she spoke in a conversational tone.

"You don't seem at all disturbed. Do you realize that my finger is on the trigger and that in my nervousness I might press it?"

He shrugged his shoulders and spoke, languidly indifferent:

"We are all in the hands of fate. If my time has not come, your finger will not press the trigger. Then, too," he smiled pleasantly, "you might miss me, you know."

With a little nervous gesture she lowered the revolver and rested her hand on her knee, the muzzle still pointing at him.

"I happen to be a good shot and I could scarcely miss you at such close range."

An unblinking smile met her remark and in the short pause which followed she bit her lip. Then she told him with haughty brevity, to lower his arms. He did so and stood quite still, watching her.

"Why did you come here?" Madelaine spoke with sharp command. "You don't seem like an ordinary-thief."

He bowed ironically. "Thanks." He glanced down at his clothes. "Appearances are often misleading. Let us say that I have a fleeting interest in the jewels you wore to-night."

His coolness confused her. No man she had ever known had ever used quite so disconcerting a tone with her.

"How did you get in?" Her glance sped swiftly from his hat to his shoes.

He told her that he had mingled with her guests, but not for long, and had had no difficulty in locating her charming apartment. She interrupted him eagerly:

"I heard steps on the gravel under my windows a little while ago. You came up over the balcony."

"They were not my steps in the garden and I did not come over the balcony. I came up the stairs and through the door," he said calmly. Then, with a slight bow he asked her if he might be permitted to remove his hat. Disdainfully, she answered yes.

"And my gloves?" he asked gently.

She merely stared at him as he removed his hat and gloves. Her face

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expressed an interesting blend of annoyance, puzzled wonderment and curiosity. When she spoke, it was as if she were not quite sure of her ground, a sensation so unique in her experience as to evoke a vague apprehension, almost a thrill, of adventure.

"Do you realize that the police are on their way to this house?"

"Only too well," he answered depreciatingly.

"It doesn't seem to worry you." Her sarcasm imperceptibly lessened the social gap between them. This she vaguely perceived and resented.

"I throw myself on your mercy," he said quietly.

"The idea!" His surprising assurance quickened the vague sense of adventure. "Do you think for a minute that I intend to let you go?"

"Why not?" His calmness made her breathless. "What satisfaction would it give you to hand me over to the police? I have been unfortunate, but—of course, if you are determined to send me up—" his smile was one of gentle resignation, "what is to be, will be."

Madelaine rose abruptly. "Wait! don't move!" she commanded him. Cautiously she backed across the room, keeping her eyes fixed upon him. When she reached the opposite wall she fumbled with her hand back of her until she found the electric switch. In a second the room was lighted by shaded lamps. Then she walked back to the intruder and told him to turn his back to her. He obeyed with prompt docility. She told him to turn his pockets inside out—all of them. He dropped his hat and gloves to the floor and laughed softly. She watched in silence as he turned out each pocket, producing a handkerchief, a wallet, and a little loose change which he held in his hand as he wheeled about for inspection. Convinced that he was unarmed her last faint qualm of physical fear subsided.

"You did tell the truth, after all," she said dryly.

In growing wonderment and a curiosity against which her dignity vainly struggled, Madelaine studied him. When she spoke it was with slow deliberation and a tinge of unguarded friendliness.

"You don't act or speak a *bit* like a thief. I—I would like to—to know about you. Will you—tell me——"

"Delighted, I'm sure." With quiet self-possession he replaced his belongings and put his hat and gloves on a table near the window. Madelaine moved to the divan in front of the fireplace and sat down. He stood with his back to the low-burning fire, watching her with speculative eyes.

"Tell me——" she began imperatively, but her lips remained parted on the last word, and her eyes widened as she turned her head with a little jerk toward the windows. A confused medley of sounds came muffled from the drive way; the whir of a motor, voices, and the shrill call of a whistle. Madelaine jumped to her feet and stared blankly at the man before her.

"Good Heavens! The police! I'd almost forgotten." She spoke in a breathless undertone.

He looked at her and said with quiet irony:

"The point of view does make a difference. I can't say that *I* had forgotten."

"Don't stand there like that," she threw at him in a sharp whisper. "For heaven's sake *do* something!"

"Is it possible you have had a change of heart?"

His uncanny self-control and the smiling effrontery of his question, goaded her to action.

"Oh, yes, yes,—the window—quick!"

"No use," he shook his head. "They'll watch the windows. It's too late. It's fate, you see, and you can't beat fate."

"If you won't do anything, I will," she said quickly.

She ran to the switch by the door and turned off the lights. There remained only the droplight over the bed. At that instant there was a knock on the door and the excited voice of Janis called:

"Madam, madam!"

Madelaine stepped away from the door and called drawlingly:

"Well, what is it? What on earth's the matter?"

"Oh, madam, the police!" Janis was hysterical. "They say they were called here—that there are burglars in the house!"

"All right, Janis, wait a moment," she spoke with peremptory brevity. She hurried to the dressing table, dropped the revolver into a drawer, and from another she drew a pocketbook and fumbled nervously for some bills. Then she stepped quickly to the door and opened it a few inches, thrusting the bills into the maid's hand.

"Give this money to the poor fellows," she said gently. "Tell them I'm so sorry, but it's all a mistake. For a moment I thought there was a man in my room, but I was mistaken."

"I am so frightened," quavered Janis, "is madam sure she is quite safe?"

"Perfectly. Now good night, go to bed." Madelaine gently pushed the door until the lock clicked.

She stood motionless by the door until the sound of the departing automobile grew faint in the distance, then she walked to the fireplace and sat down with a sigh of nervous fatigue.

The deep shadows in the room blurred the expression on the man's face. She could not detect the thin curl of his lips nor the cold appraisal in his eyes when he asked her why she didn't give him up. Her reply came nonchalantly:

"Oh, I don't know; some impulse. Call it a woman's curiosity." Then she

added quickly: "You can't go now. Wait till they get well out of the way. I want to hear your story. Sit down, please, and tell it to me."

His eyes flashed in involuntary tribute to her temerity. There was a shade of warmth in his voice as he said slowly:

"By Jove, you're plucky!" Then, calmly as he seated himself: "Where shall I begin?"

She wanted first to know why he had chosen that particular night to come there. The newspapers had supplied his information, he said, regarding the ball. As if in afterthought, he added that her husband's prominence had contributed valuable information as to his whereabouts. Madelaine's eyes widened. Again she was nonplused by his effrontery.

"Do you mean," she faltered, "did you come here because—you knew—he was away?"

"Having a natural aversion for nasty complications I avoid them when I can."

"It certainly shows more caution than daring to choose a defenseless woman for your victim," she said disdainfully.

"You are quite safe at my hands," he said softly. "Nothing would induce me to harm a woman."

"Just rob her, that's all." Madelaine gave a low laugh of derision.

"The man who robs a woman merely of her jewels may be forgiven," said the intruder.

She stared at him, frowning. "I don't—quite—understand you."

"There is," he answered, "a certain illusive possession of woman the price of which, I believe, is above rubies."

Madelaine moved in her chair as if uncomfortable.

"Your—language—and your—ideas—are certainly peculiar for a criminal."

He made a slight gesture of remonstrance. "That is a harsh word."

"To steal anything is to commit a

crime, isn't it?" she said sharply, then, with a more kindly impulse: "What started you downhill?"

Briefly he told her a few facts. His bringing up had been unimpeachable; he had had every advantage but too much money. Then came the shipwreck of the family fortunes, and on his part, extravagance, weak will, all the rest of it. He hadn't been clever enough to get money within the law so he got it crudely—the old story—embezzlement and—discovery. A touch of genuine sympathy warmed Madeline's voice when she said:

"Oh, I am so sorry! What happened after that?"

In the fading glow of the fire the little hollows in the man's thin face seemed to deepen. His eyes grew dark and dull and the hand resting on his knee closed slowly. A strange sense of drama quickened Madeline's pulse.

"I had a friend, a man I had known in college—not at all intimately. There was no reason why he should have cared what became of me. But he—oh, well, that is *my* story, and his," he spoke even more slowly and his gaze upon her face grew more fixed and somber, "his—is ended."

A nerve twitched suddenly in Madeline's face but she was conscious only of curiosity.

"Why—what happened to him?"

The intruder turned his head and stared at the dying embers of the fire.

"He killed himself—and now, I—well, nothing seems to matter much to me now except——"

She bent forward in her chair. "Why did he kill himself?" she asked quickly.

The man turned his gaze directly upon her. Again the little smile pulled the corners of his mouth.

"It would hardly interest you to hear about a man you have never"—he hesitated, then added with faint emphasis—"known."

"But I am." Her curiosity had deepened to interest, and back of it grew that strange sense of drama. "You have said that he came to your rescue in a crisis, and afterward killed himself. Of course I am interested. Was it because of helping you?"

The intruder shook his head and again turned his gaze to the fire. "No, for that would have made it still *my* story and I said that it was *his*. He was a victim—but not to altruism."

"Well?" she spurred him impatiently.

"To a woman!" He slowly turned and looked into her eyes.

"Oh!" Madeline's hands moved nervously over the chintz of the divan. She inwardly resented and did not understand this unwonted sensation of nervous tension, but its outward expression she could not control. Through the heavy silence a strange essence of personality seemed to reach out from the man and touch her. He was not looking at her now. Sunk deep in his chair he stared into the shadows.

"He was a wonderful chap. Clever brain, high-strung, sensitive nature, and the finest sense of honor I ever knew a man to possess. *That* was what made it so damnably hard for him when he found himself—in love with a married woman."

Madeline gave a slight start. "He must have been very old-fashioned."

"Do you call it that?" he asked sharply in quick resentment of her light cynicism.

"Well, at any rate, why did he fall in love with her if he had such scruples?"

With quiet deliberation he answered, compelling her direct gaze:

"For one thing, he believed her to be free when he first began to care. Afterward—oh, well, a man with the strongest will can't always control his feelings in the beginning of such an affair. He can run away, but my friend, you see, did not run, not knowing the need. When he knew—he sim-

ply could not, that's all." The intruder's voice fell to a lower pitch. "She had him—body and soul."

"Women who have such a power," Madelaine spoke coolly, although her hands still moved restlessly over the chintz covering, "must be very remarkable—very magnetic and—beautiful."

The intruder looked down reflectively. "Beautiful—perhaps, magnetic always, but hardly remarkable. The power of seduction is pretty common. The difference in this case was that my friend had never cared for women, and was particularly averse to the obvious type of fascinator. This woman must have been very clever—and subtle—or she could never have so possessed him."

Madelaine stared at the man's bent head but answered not a word. Suddenly he looked up and met her eyes.

"I've always had a great curiosity to meet that woman," he almost drawled the words, "and see for myself just what she is like."

"Didn't she care for him?" Madelaine also seemed to drag her question.

With a short, harsh laugh that made the little nerve in Madelaine's face quiver, the intruder sprang to his feet.

"Care!" The word came like the lash of a whip. "She cared just enough to sap him of every ounce of will, of every beat of his heart, and then—when things became a bit too primitive for her æsthetic tastes—to send him with a laugh—or a curse—to his end."

He took a few agitated, uncertain steps across the room. Madelaine stared at him as if hypnotized, as she said hesitatingly:

"You make her out very—wanton. Sometimes—women are excusable for such—such apparently ruthless actions."

He stood still, looking at her, and spoke with cool incisiveness.

"The excuse in this case was a wealthy husband, a prominent social position, a cool, clear judgment, and a

heart"—he snapped his fingers—"about as big as an acorn."

Madelaine almost whispered her answer: "Perhaps—she really loved—her husband—all the time."

The intruder's dark, thin form seemed to take on stature and substance against the shadowy walls. His voice came to her on a wave of emotion.

"More shame to her," she does. The only possible excuse for making hash of a man's feelings as that woman did, would be that she *didn't* love her husband. And even so, all the worse when the end comes, if she refuses to leave her husband." He stepped nearer and spoke with measured emphasis: "Either way you put it, the woman plays a despicable game unless she plays it to the end and pays—what she owes—every—damned—bit of it. This woman—paid *nothing*. The man—my friend—paid—with his life."

Madelaine turned her head from him as she said haltingly:

"It has evidently made you very bitter. Were you with him when—when it happened?"

"You mean," he said almost gently, "his death? No—the whole thing—the beginning and the end—happened one winter, when I was at work again—thanks to him—and he," his voice sank almost to a whisper, "he—went out—for his health—to—Egypt."

Like an arrow from its bow, Madelaine sprang from the divan and faced him with dilated eyes. His own face grew more tense as he watched her.

"Why—*why* have you told me this? Who are you? Her voice was shrill with excitement.

"I—I am the friend of the man who loved a woman unto death—in—Egypt."

She gave a stifled gasp. "Who are you, I say?"

"What matters a little thing like a name?" Once more he had cool command of his voice.

Madelaine moistened her dry lips. "Who—was the man—the man who was—your friend?"

"You know his name," he said slowly, staring at her.

With a sound that was like a groan she drew back from him. Her face was livid. By a supreme effort of will she spoke.

"Why have you come here to-night?"

"To make the acquaintance of the woman who drove the man I loved beyond all other human beings, to his death."

She drew nearer to him and spoke with mounting anger.

"You are *not* a thief! You worked on my sympathies with lies about your life just to taunt me about—about him."

"I am not a thief. You drew your own deductions. But my story of misfortune is God's truth—every word of it. And the man who loved *you*," he put bitter scorn into the word, "was the man who saved me from ruin and put me on my feet."

Madelaine met his scorn with a defiant straightening of her slim body.

"How do you *know* he?"—she shuddered—"killed himself because of me? What right have you to accuse me of ruining his life? I couldn't help his loving me, could I?"

"No, you couldn't help his loving you." The intruder spoke now without bitterness. "That wasn't what drove him to despair. It was his conviction that you loved him, and the shock of finally realizing that you didn't. *That's* what breaks a man, the cat-and-mouse game such women as you enjoy."

The intruder's sunken eyes stared into the white face of the woman in front of him. Then he said quietly, as if no tragic significance lay in his words:

"I vowed after his death, to meet you sooner or later, and avenge—in one

way or another—the man to whom I owed everything on earth."

Sudden fury galvanized Madelaine into action. She moved a step nearer to him and her angry eyes glared into his somber ones.

"You have met me—you have taunted me——" Her rage and humiliation seemed to sap her strength. "You have avenged him—now go—go—I say *GO!*"

He stared at her with a look so cold and unflinching that it was like a point of steel reaching for her heart. With pitiless calm he answered:

"I have met you—yes," he inclined his head very slightly, "but I have not avenged him—yet."

Madelaine felt a primitive instinct to reach for those cold, merciless eyes and close their hated gaze forever; to silence the thin, cruel lips—to hurt—hurt—to——

Suddenly through the stillness of the night came the low purr of a motor. Several seconds passed before the sound of the approaching car, penetrated the senses of the woman who had been reduced to a single impulse of hate. When in a flash she recognized the sound, she sprang toward the windows.

"My God, the police! Keep quiet! They mustn't find you here now!"

The intruder stood quite still, smiling. "It is not the police," he said coolly.

"What do you mean?" she gasped at him.

"I *think*," he drawled the words, "it is—your husband."

"My—husband!" Sudden realization overpowered her. She threw out her hand to him. "Go! go! He must not find you here!"

"To find her—lover—in his wife's bedroom would certainly be—disconcerting."

The cold cruelty of his smile left her almost numb. She thrust her face forward beseechingly.

"For God's sake go!" Her whisper held agonizing fear.

Still he did not move when the sound of a man's voice came distant but clear through the panels of the door. Hate and fear twisted Madelaine's face into an ugly mask. Her body seemed to shrink. Suddenly she sprang across the room to her dressing table. She tore at the drawer into which she had dropped the revolver, then halted irresolute. A horrible sense of futility, of sex powerlessness, swept over her. Her fear changed to poignant despair. She rushed back to where he stood and flung herself crouching at his feet. Outside her bedroom door she heard her husband speaking. Then came a knock on the door and Anthony's voice called softly:

"Hello, dear, let me in." As he spoke he tried the handle of the door.

In a desperate whisper the woman on the floor pleaded with the man who stood looking down at her.

"For God's sake go! Have mercy on me!"

The handle of the door rattled and Anthony called, a little impatiently: "Aren't you awake, dear?"

In the next few seconds the drama sped toward its end; sped so swiftly and so silently that Madelaine, cowering and inert, missed her cue. To have torn open her door and let her husband face the despoiler of her peace; to have given him an active part in this epilogue of the tragedy enacted long ago; to have trusted to something bigger than chance for her final curtain; but the moment of a lifetime found her and left her a nerveless, pitiable, huddled form upon the floor. With bulging eyes and senses momentarily paralyzed, she saw the intruder plunge across the room to the bed and turn out the droplight. Then came the crash of a heavy object falling, and she sprang to her feet. In a shaft of moonlight, as the curtain was torn aside, she saw him vanish over the

railing of the balcony. Swiftly she groped her way to the switch by the door and turned on the lights, as Anthony's excited voice called to her to let him in. With the turning of the handle he burst into the room almost knocking her over. Towering above her he stared from her white face to the overturned table. For a second she shrank from him, then impulsively she threw herself into his arms with a low cry.

"Oh Anthony! I'm so excited!" She strove desperately for self-control. "I've had *such* an experience!"

He made no pretense of a caress nor of sympathetic response to her evident agitation. He drew away and stared at the debris on the floor.

"What was going on in this room?"

His tone and look were so harsh that she trembled. The next instant, with swift recovery, she drew him forward into the room. She begged him to sit down, she was so tired and nervous, and let her tell him all about it.

"About what?" he demanded impatiently.

She tried to smile and fidgeted with the lace on her negligee. "About the— the burglar!" Anthony started and threw a quick glance at the windows. "Yes—here—in this very room. He escaped by the window just as you called the second time."

Before she finished, Anthony ran to one of the windows and dragged back the curtain. She hurried after him and seized his arm, insisting that he could not catch the man, but of course she had known he would try to, that was why she wanted to give the poor fellow a chance to get away before letting Anthony in. Her husband turned sharply and stared angrily at her.

"'Poor fellow,' what the devil are you talking about?"

She begged him, her eyes filling with tears which she tried to check, to sit down and let her explain everything.

Reluctantly he stood silent and watched her sink limply upon the divan. With agitated gasps and pauses she told him of her fright when, upon going to the window to open it, before putting out her light, she had become conscious, without actually seeing him, of a man standing behind the curtains. She recounted every dramatic detail up to the moment when she had given Janis money for the police. Anthony's gaze grew wide with astonishment.

"Do you actually mean that you kept a thief in your room with the deliberate intention of helping him to escape?"

"Why not?" she urged with a degree of recovered poise. "I was sorry for him. Going to prison doesn't reform a man, anyway."

"He played on your sympathies and you thought you could reform him—an ordinary crook! Good Lord, but women are fools!"

Her recovered poise enabled her to say with an access of dignity. "He didn't act or speak like an ordinary crook and his story was," her hesitation was imperceptible, "a very sad one."

Again Anthony glanced at the overturned table and the books scattered on the floor. He spoke with blunt sarcasm:

"Judging from the wreck, he must have been eager enough to get away."

"In his panic he ran into the table. I was almost as panic-stricken as he, for I *did* want him to escape."

As she was speaking, her husband walked to the table and put it upright. He picked up one or two of the books. On the floor under the books was a man's pair of white gloves. Anthony bent slowly and picked them up. With her first glimpse of the gloves Madeline's face stiffened with swift realization of the situation. As Anthony turned to her she made a supreme effort to control her features and meet his eyes with equanimity.

"Do these, by any chance, belong to your—burglar?" He looked steadily at her.

"He—must have forgotten them." She spoke indifferently.

"White—kid—gloves——" Anthony spoke with slow intensity.

Nervously eager, she undertook explanation. The burglar was in full evening dress—he had entered the house by mingling with the guests—then he had hidden in her room.

Her husband's gaze was fixed, and his words came in a cold, smooth rhythm:

"White—kid—gloves Full—evening dress. A—burglar!"

Every nerve in her was throbbingly aware of the suspicion in his mind. With all the strength of her will she tried to appear unconscious of it. Gently she said:

"Why yes, that's how he *said* he got into the house. Don't they often do it that way?"

With a mounting anger which he could no longer suppress he said tensely:

"No—they don't."

Suddenly her own anger began to rise. She was enraged at herself, but far more so at a situation which left her in a position so false that extrication from it would strain her ingenuity. She looked Anthony coldly in the eyes and said haughtily:

"Well, all I know is that *this* thief wore evening dress."

"*This* thief—evidently did." He spoke with bitter emphasis. She sprang to her feet and faced him.

"*What*—are you trying to insinuate?"

With unexpected violence he threw the gloves from him and his look was menacing.

"By God, I'm not trying to insinuate anything! I'll say what I have to say. I almost believed your clever lies at first."

"How *dare* you!" she flashed at him.

"Lies—I repeat." His scorn of her seemed deeper than his rage. "Woman's lies—the kind a man hasn't ingenuity enough to invent on such short notice. It all sounded plausible enough. I was ready to swallow the whole damned queerness of the situation. But *now*"—his voice grew colder—"now—I understand. I have been coming to an understanding for months."

She drew back in genuine consternation. "For—months! What do you mean?"

Bitterly he told her that he had been a blind fool—that he had trusted her in her latest—episode—as he had trusted her in similar episodes in the past, but that *this* man he had not trusted—but that *this* man he had not trusted for an hour—that in his own damnable way this man cared—that she obviously knew it and appeared to enjoy it.

"I tried," he ended, "to let it go at that."

She stared at him stupefied. "Do you," she gasped excitedly, "actually mean—that you believe—that Bruce Macklin—I won't pretend I don't know who you mean—is my lover—and that he came—here—to my bedroom—to-night?"

Coldly, Anthony said that there appeared to be a close connection between the two deductions. Rigid with anger and fear she told him that Bruce Macklin was nothing, *nothing* to her, in the way Anthony meant. He was clever. His attentions had pleased her. The same thing had often happened before and Anthony had never been horrid and suspicious.

He answered quietly: "Perhaps because of a difference in the other men. Up to now—so far as I know—your taste has been impeccable. You have been—rather of an epicure."

The affront—she felt it an insult—conveyed by his light irony, goaded her

into momentary indifference to the larger issues involved.

"So," she said scornfully, "a man doesn't really ever trust a woman at all. Just counts on the other man's honor!"

"The world, husbands included," he said slowly, "judges a woman less by what she does than by the man she does it with."

Of a sudden her scorn and anger melted to anxious desire to convince Anthony that the man he suspected of being her lover was nothing to her. Her voice broke as she pleaded for his trust in her. She approached him and tried to put her hand on his arm, but he drew slightly away from her.

"Oh, please, please, dear, be good to me," she urged. "I swear I am telling you the truth. The man in my room to-night was—was no one I have ever seen or heard of before." To tell him the whole incredible story seemed futile. It was too preposterous.

Anthony's face expressed stony disbelief.

"You *don't*—believe me!" she whispered.

"I don't believe you." He spoke without emotion and slowly, with bent head, walked to the door.

"Anthony!" Her voice rang out strong and clear and he turned to look at her. "Can't you realize how absurd you are to act like this? You might accuse me of bribing the servants so why don't you ring up the police department and find out for yourself that I called for help?"

"Called for help!" Anthony spoke contemptuously. "What does that prove? How do I know you didn't *think* there was a burglar in the room and when you discovered—your mistake—you sent away the police."

"You're perfectly crazy! Men don't go to women's rooms uninvited for the purpose you mean. And if I *had* asked a *lover* here, you don't suppose I'd take him for a burglar, do you?"

Anthony wavered. There was a look in her eyes which seemed to express truth more convincingly than her words. With sullen and deliberate weighing of the possibilities, he said:

"I believe you're capable of staging the whole performance and calling the police just as a ruse."

"Why? In Heaven's name, *why*?"

Her voice was sharp and shrill from excitement. She took a few nervous steps across the room. "You're simply insane, Anthony, to use such an argument. What would I gain by such a ruse?"

From somewhere in the house came confused sounds—loud voices, doors slamming. Madelaine and her husband stood listening, their attention for the moment diverted from one another. Then came a running step in the hall and a knock on the door, with Janis calling:

"Oh, madam! Monsieur! The police! They have caught the burglar!"

Anthony darted a confused look at Madelaine. Her face showed utter bewilderment. He strode to the door and flung it open. Janis stumbled into the room. In excited staccato she told them that one of the policemen had hung about the grounds after the others had left. That he had seen some one crouching in the bushes, and later had caught a man as he jumped from the window, with a sack into which he had thrown some silver.

The maid's story had a curious effect upon Madelaine. Surprise and astonishment changed rapidly to speculative wonder; then she saw an avenue of escape and followed it breathlessly.

"You see, you see, Anthony! There were burglars, just as I said!"

He threw her a searching look, then directed the maid to bring the policeman and his captive upstairs. With startled acquiescence Janis hurried away. Madelaine nervously bit her lip,

watching her husband who stood motionless, his eyes fixed on the door.

In a few seconds Janis reappeared with a tall, thin police officer, and a short, burly, red-haired, young fellow who wore soiled and seedy clothes. He looked with sullen defiance at Anthony, then with curiosity at Madelaine. His handcuffed hands were coarse, and knotted from hard labor. There was nothing about him to suggest the second-story expert.

Anthony put sharp, brief questions to him. He answered them with sulky directness. He had heard of the ball—saw a chance of making a get-away with some silver—had hung around the grounds until the house was quiet. He added bitterly that he had been out of a job for months and had never robbed a house before. Then Anthony launched a startling remark at him.

"Your accomplice made *his* get-away all right."

The man's eyes opened wide in surprise. "Don' know whatcher talkin' 'bout. I ain't got no accomplice."

Madelaine had started at her husband's probing comment. Now she trembled at the burglar's reply.

"Think again," said Anthony, watching the man keenly. "I'll see that you get an easy sentence—I may refuse to prefer charges against you, if you'll just tell us about that accomplice of yours who came to the ball in evening clothes, and mingled with the guests." Anthony's words conveyed to his wife's quivering nerves a cutting irony, a mocking reminder of her assertion. "Give us an idea where to find him, eh?"

The burglar's eyes grew round with wonder, then his broad mouth widened in a grim smile.

"Tell yer, mister, I ain't got no accomplice. Ain't never been in this game. Sorry can't make up a gag like dat ter please yer, but I ain't got no pals what sports open-face clothes."

Anthony, studying the man's face, knew that he spoke the truth. He said quietly:

"You didn't happen to come to this room a while ago?"

The burglar stared at Anthony, then his glance took in the room, and Madelaine, standing white and tense in the middle of it.

"Naw—I *ain't* been here. The bull here, *he* got me clean."

Anthony turned to his wife with a look that seemed to scorch her.

"Is this the man who entered your room to-night?"

Madelaine's pulse beat quickly but she forced herself to say with calm assurance:

"Certainly not! I told you he wore evening clothes. Quite evidently an accomplice, in spite of what this man says."

The burglar flashed an ugly look at her, then spoke to Anthony:

"Don' know whatcher game is, mister, but yer can see me in hell if I ain't tellin' yer the trut'. I tell yer I ain't *got* no accomplice."

Anthony, calm and white of face, addressed the policeman:

"It's all right, officer. Take your man, but I don't wish to prefer charges against him."

The policeman nodded assent and with a motion toward the door told his prisoner to "come along." The burglar gave Anthony a quick look indicative of astonishment rather than gratitude, and walked into the hall. Janis, perplexed and nervous, followed the two men out of the room, shutting the door behind her.

Anthony stood as if made of granite until the sound of their footsteps grew faint, then once more slowly, with bent head, he walked to the door. With a low, despairing cry Madelaine ran after him and spoke wildly as his hand sought the knob of the door:

"You *must* believe me! Anthony!

Look at me! Good God, this is too awful—impossible!" His hand was turning the knob. "Anthony!" She seized his arm and gripped it with her slender fingers. "You can't, you shan't go like this!" The last words came in a wail of pain and despair. Suddenly he turned and faced her.

"I am going—like this—without scene or scandal." For a moment he stared at her in silence. Her parted, twitching lips were dumb as she stared upward into his face. His voice deepened as he went on: "For years, almost unknown to me, my faith in you has been gradually undermined by your—affairs—your experiments—my God—with other men. I think—until to-night—I have always trusted you, to keep the letter of the law, but I must have known all the time that you never loved me."

"Oh, but I *did*. That's *just* the point. I never cared for—those others. It was just the excitement of the chase—the lust of conquest. Oh, I was selfish, wicked, but I *always* loved *you* best."

"A strange love at best—at worst, it means," he swept the room with tired, unhappy eyes, "*this*."

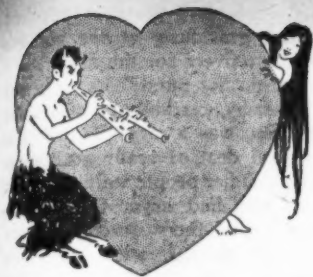
"I love you, Anthony! There is no one else, I swear it! I *love* you, I tell you!"

She spoke with an abandon of passion which was like a sudden glow from the ashes of an untended fire. But it could not reach or warm him through the accumulated chill of years.

He turned again to the door. The grip of her fingers on his arm relaxed and she shrank back, staring at him. Her face was white and cold, and her eyes were dull with pain. He did not look at her when he said:

"Something has gone. I feel only distrust—and now that I know that I feel it, it is—for me—the end."

No sound came from the woman as he slowly turned the handle of the door. It was—the end.



Romany Hearts

By Louise Rice

Author of "The Never-Used Room," etc.

II.—Who Dukkers for the Newborn

THESE are good gorgios," John Lane said to Prince Kola, as he checked his *wardo*, the first of the eight wagons in the gypsy caravan, before the little old stone house of Martin Koppf.

The prince, who had but lately come from England, nodded his head with pleasure.

"It is like the old country, and there is a girl like my mother used to be," he answered with the slight English accent which seemed so odd, coming from him, for he was what you might call obtrusively Romany. He wore big gold rings in his ears and a strip of red cloth around his head, confining his long black curls. He had on a blue velvet coat and an embroidered waistcoat with big silver buttons, and an enormous gold ring on the middle finger of his right hand. John Lane, in his soft black hat and simple white shirt and corduroy trousers, would have looked like a common clod beside him if it had not been for the rare delicacy of his aristocratic old face.

As for the Koppfs, Martha and Martin, who had come out to their gate to welcome the occupants of the wagons, they felt as shocked as if one of their own neighbors had suddenly tricked himself out in play-acting truck. For only one member of John Lane's tribe of Romanys dressed with anything like this ostentation. The Princess Dora Parse made a fitting companion to him, in appearance, but she was a woman.

Martin Koppf shook hands, however, with the newcomer, but scowled as old John gave him his title.

"What you a prince of, mister?" he asked.

The prince waved his hand about his head. "Of the air," he said.

Mrs. Koppf went around to the back of the wagon to speak to Alma, John's little, frail, old wife, whom she had not seen since the summer before, for the Lane tribe spent their winters in the lower part of Maryland.

Anna Koppf, with her two little brothers, bent over the bed of violets by the well, pretending to be deeply interested in them, but under her long lashes she was looking intently at that amazing figure beside old John. He was a man at whom a queen might have looked with pleasure. The Prince of The Ré, was his nickname, and it fitted well, for while he was very dark, there was a kind of radiance about him, as of the sun. His hair shone so, blue black, and his eyes were so warm and sweet and his perfect teeth were always flashing out in a smile which no dog, however cross, could resist. This is the best possible test for a smile. Humans are not so quick to read a face as dogs, as every Romany knows, so it was a compliment that they also called the prince "the beloved of the bitches." Because you can sometimes fool a dog or a mere man, but a female, if she is as wise as some are—oh, oh, that is a different matter!

Anna Koppf, catching the full force of that smile turned on her wondered why she suddenly felt so flushed and uneasy. She wanted to laugh and she wanted to run into the house, but most of all she wanted to stay where she was.

The chies and chals were crowding into the yard, as they always did, for a drink of water, for it was a long stretch from Paterson to Boonton, and on a spring day the water in the wagons was apt to be warm. Besides, Marda, the scholar of the tribe, had gone to Dover "High" with Anna, and the two girls always had a good deal to say to each other. The Princess Dora Parse came, too, but although she wore the full and ancient Romany dress, Anna was so used to her that she did not seem like a being from another world, as the young man did who now swung himself over the big red wheel and came sauntering in at the gate, the last of the crowd. Anna did not look toward him, but she knew each step that he took toward her.

He came straight up the garden path, and all the others made way for him, respectfully. He came so fast that Anna did not have time to begin an absorbing conversation with Marda, as her shyness prompted her to do. Before she knew it, he was before her.

"I beg your pawdon—may I have a glawss of water?" he said—just like that.

One of the Ferrands, who lived near Anna in the big old Ferrand mansion, had lately brought a bride "from the other side"; a cool, stately lady who reduced her simple neighbors to confusion by her pale beauty and her accent. So, when Anna heard those same accents from a man who looked like the picture of one of Howard Pyle's pirates, that Miss Bevins, the teacher of English literature, had given Anna, one year—why, Anna felt that her head went round.

The prince was true to the royal tra-

dition of ease and presence of mind. He smiled graciously at the girl and reached tentatively for the dipper.

"If you do not mind?" he suggested.

"Why—why, certainly," Anna stammered. She was a nice girl, who had seen a good deal of really good social life, although her people were very plain farmers, who had never forsaken the simple ways of their Dutch ancestors, and she was furious with herself for behaving so stupidly. The man was only a gypsy, after all.

"Better draw a fresh bucket," she said, "it is too near the bottom to be cool."

The prince bent his head in thanks and reached for the rope, but one of the chals sprang forward and took it deferentially from his hand. The prince smiled at the boy, and waited, one hand thrust into the black silk sash which was his belt, while the bucket dropped down to the cool, green depths of the well.

Anna became aware that there was an odd kind of silence among the young people, who had been laughing and chattering but a moment before. They were looking either at the prince or at each other with some hidden meaning, she was sure. Then the dripping bucket came up and the boy poised it on the edge of the well curb, but neither he nor the prince made a move toward the dipper.

"Won't you oblige me by dipping the water for me, miss?" the prince inquired.

"Why—why, certainly," said Anna. She knew that she was trembling a little, but she did not know why. She filled the granite dipper and held it out. The prince took it from her hands.

"Thank you very much," he said, in his correct English voice, and then he deliberately poured half the water at her feet, but carefully, so as not to spatter her pretty dress or her white shoes, and the rest he spilled over his

left hand. Then he filled the dipper again and drank, bowing to her as he did so.

It seemed to Anna that her cheeks were on fire. She did not know what to think, nor understand why her undemonstrative friend, Marda, should suddenly put an arm around her.

"Your water is sweet, miss," the prince said, then, "all the sweeter to me because I pour it and I drink it in token of the wish that you shall be my wife. Our people understand." He looked around at the dark, eager young faces. "It is the Romany way. To-night, if you will permit me, I will speak with your father."

"I—I don't know what you mean!" Anna recoiled against her friend's arm, her eyes filled with fear. The prince made a slight movement with his hand and the chies and chals instantly slipped away to the gate. Then he took a step nearer the girl.

"Darling," Oh, what a voice that man could have when he chose—like the low, divine notes of a cello. "Beloved. Beautiful. Star. I knew that I was coming to you. I felt it in the sweet, spring wind to-day. When I saw your golden head I knew, I knew! It is so with us. Romanys listen to the heart. As you will, for you have true eyes. I am at your feet and I pour my life into your heart. That is the meaning of the water-drinking. It is an old custom. It has never been used for dishonor. I, Prince Kola, wish to be your husband. I will speak to your father to-night, of how I will care for you. Bear me in your heart, beloved."

He pulled off the red strip which bound his hair, and he bent until its rings fell over his face, and he kissed Anna Koppf's hand with as much ease as if he were in an English drawing-room, and went out to the wagons.

Mrs. Koppf and her husband had seen that last tableau. They were indignantly scowling and staring, as old John

shook the reins over his horses, but the prince checked him and leaned forward from his seat on the other side.

"Pardon, sir," he said, "but may I have the honor of calling upon you this evening, on a most important matter?"

Martin Koppf swallowed hard and said:

"Well——"

Like all his family, the Dutchman was always inarticulate. At that moment, seething with rage as he was, he could no more have uttered the indignant words which were in his mind, than he could have suddenly spoken Arabic. Indeed, even after the Romanys had gone, he stamped around the house and filled his pipe and sent up clouds of smoke, before he found his voice and roared up the stairs that Anna should come down.

Anna could not obey at once, because, behind her shut and locked chamber door, she was having the first fit of hysterics of her existence. And all she would say, when she did come, was that she didn't know anything about anything. Anna could talk with those pansy eyes of hers, and with her sensitive mouth, and with the color which was always coming and going in her exquisite skin, but when it came to discussing a matter which made her head hot and her hands cold and robbed her of her healthy young appetite for supper, she was entirely her father's daughter.

Prince Kola arrived at seven o'clock, but Martin, who was looking for the alien figure of the afternoon, did not kick him down the garden path to the gate, as he had loudly announced his intention of doing. It is not easy for a plain farmer deliberately to kick a gentleman in English tweeds, with a little walking stick, and a plain black hat and a wonderful pearl in his obviously expensive tie. The long, black curls were mysteriously tucked back. Mrs. Koppf suspected the agency of a hair-

pin, but her husband merely saw that the fellow looked like any other man, now, except for the color of his skin. Martin was not an imaginative man. His daughter got her temperament from her mother, whose pansy eyes were just like her daughter's, with the difference that hers had been dulled with many secret tears.

The tale which Prince Kola told old man Koppf, and which Koppf totally disbelieved, was one which would have failed to find credence in many better-informed minds.

He was rich, said the prince. He owned a fairly large estate in England, and shares in the properties of the Lees, the wealthiest of the English Romanys. He had an hereditary castle in Hungary, from which his family had originally come. His mother had been the Lady Honoria Bentley, and she had brought to her husband property from her Scottish mother. It was many centuries since his forefather had come from Hungary, and "at home," he was considered an Englishman, to all intents and purposes, being related, through the Bentleys, to half of Yorkshire. He was an Episcopalian. There were no entangling alliances in his life. He wished to marry the golden one whose lovely eyes he had felt, long before he saw her home, drawing him onward. There he lost a little of the English gentleman, and became the Romany chief. Might he have her? He would not only settle a dower on her, according to English law, but he would put in her hands all that he owned, according to Romany custom. He would never ask her to travel with the wagons, unless "her feet longed for the road," he added, with one of his flashing smiles. As for him, once in a while, he longed for it. Then he put on the dress of his rank among the Romanys and went away for a while. That was why he was here, in "the States." He had come to see Aunt Alice Lee, a distant

connection, about a division of property in the tribe in England, but mostly for the joy of life "without four walls."

Martin Koppf suddenly stood up and knocked out the ashes of his pipe on the cold Franklin stove.

"I think you're a liar," he stated, coldly. "I don't believe any of it. I never heard any o' John Lane's folks talk like all that. I always kinda liked 'em. We've known 'em for years. But you—don't you come around my girl. You—you big liar. D'you hear? I wouldn't think o' givin' her to one of the boys from the wagons, that she's known all her life, an' I sure ain't goin' to give her to a smirking, dolled-up, long-haired liar like you. That's flat and plain."

Not the shadow of a resentment clouded the prince's face. He just got up and faded out of the door; so silently, for all his thick English shoes, that there was not even a crunching on the garden path. Martin Koppf and his wife stared at each other, and then the man swore. The fellow had made him nervous and mad. There was something supremely insolent in his absolute ignoring of the insulting words which had been addressed to him, and something uncanny in his noiseless exit.

John Lane's tribe camped that year on the upper Rockaway, where there is fair fishing, and the people of the locality went up there Saturday afternoons, to buy the quaint, strong baskets which the women made, and to have Aunt Alice Lee tell their fortunes.

Prince Kola naturally attracted a good deal of attention, for he was both darker and handsomer than the brown-haired, blue-eyed boys of the tribe, who would have been very much like the descendants of the Dutch and English among whom they wandered, if it had not been for their high cheek bones and their oddly set eyes, beneath brows which no Teuton or Saxon ever owned. But this prince fellow, now! The pret-

tiest girls from Boonton and Morristown could hardly get a smile out of him, and few of the visitors ever heard him utter a word. The prince did not talk overmuch to gorgios when he was out with the *wardos* and the *tans*.

"On the wagon and in the tent, I am all Romany," he would sometimes say to the men in a certain quite exclusive club in London, to which he and his father and his grandfather belonged.

Anna Koppf went about her usual duties, but she was more silent than ever, and that worried her mother. Her father said it was a good sign. The girl was settling down. Soon she would be ready to accept Lester Smith, who helped his mother run her chicken farm and was a steady, thrifty lad. When he talked like that Mrs. Koppf would push her spectacles up on her forehead, and look doubtfully over at Anna, who only smiled a little and bent her head over her sewing.

When her mother looked at Anna in that way, she felt as though she must see straight through her dress—as if her timid yet searching gaze must be fastened upon the big man's ring, all worked with strange figures, which hung by a concealed ribbon around her neck.

John Lane's tribe usually went away by September, but this was a wonderfully mild autumn and they lingered on. Chestnuts were thick on the wild hills back of Boonton when they hired from Van Duyne an old house, unused for years, which stood beside the Morris canal, half a mile from Boonton.

"We have matters still to attend to," old John told the curious Van Duyne. "We may have to stay until nearly Christmas. May we have wood from the wood lot, if we are careful with it?"

So they backed their wagons in a semicircle about the doorway which led into the big living room, and kept a fire in the high old fireplace, and scrubbed

the floor and put a big pile of blankets before the hearth for such as wanted to enjoy the bright flames, but their lives went on in the wagons, for they were really very commodious and well-furnished homes, with many a convenience.

On the south side of the old house there was a big porch where the sun struck for many hours, and there it was warm, even on a coolish day. They put a bed there, and a table, and a strong, big screen of awning cloth to shut out drafts.

As the days went by, Prince Kola took to wandering down the canal. He would be away for hours, and when he got in, tired and cold and silent, he would no more than eat a little, then he would be off again.

There began to be something strained and silent about the tribe, too. And there seemed always to be some one of the older women on the towpath, looking toward Boonton. Aunt Alice Lee went down to Paterson, one day, and came back with a big package which smelled of the gorgio drug store. But not a word was said. Whatever the tribe knew, it was only whispered from one to the other. There was no general talk of it.

December came on, and the first snow fell. Now the prince spent his days and his nights prowling up and down the canal, and the tribe followed him about with looks of love and compassion. Several times old John went out and brought him in, shaking with a chill which was not that of disease or cold.

He suffered horribly, did the prince, for in him the traditions of the best of England—her gentry—fought with the wild, strong blood of the Kaulli, whose honors and dishonors are not those of the gorgios. He had done a thing which shamed the mother in him, but which was approved by his father's fierce strain, but even in that, he had offended Those, who ask of the Romany man an even greater modesty toward

women than other races are willing to strive for. So he grew thin and haggard and was no longer a child of the sun.

The tribe slipped across country to Morristown to buy provisions, so that the people in Boonton almost forgot that they were still near, but down in the Koppf garden, every morning, a girl looked with tears on the little arrangement of sticks and leaves which she always found there, renewed while she slept. Several times her father had found them before she had destroyed them, but he merely kicked them aside with his foot. He was not an observant man. Half of Boonton was whispering, before he saw what his frantic wife had known for a long time.

When he saw, he roared out a question, which Anna refused to answer. He would have beaten her, if little, wiry Martha had not hung onto his arm until his rage spent itself in curses. But when it did, he was deadly cool, as is a Dutchman's way. He opened the old door.

"For over a hundred years," he told his daughter, "only honorable Koppfs have passed this way. You are the first to disgrace it. Go out. Never come back."

Then the sturdy old blood that was in Anna showed. She stared her father in the face. She took down a shawl from behind the door and drew it over her head, and she went out, without a look behind her. One of the odd little arrangements of sticks and leaves lay in her path. She stopped and looked long at it. She knew what it said, what they had all been saying to her since the early summer.

"Come, I will wait for you until I die."

People who saw Anna Koppf go out of her father's house in that way knew what had happened. They ran to peep from behind curtains and shades, but the tall girl did not give them a glance.

With swift directness, she turned to the canal and went up the frosty towpath.

There was a patch of woods beyond the town. She got as far as that before she sank down, and it was there that Prince Kola, on his weary patrol, found her, at last. Auntie Alice Lee, keeping the vigil that morning, saw him come, almost running, with Anna's golden head on his big shoulder, and she sped lightly on her old feet back to the Princess Dora Parse.

"Hurry!" she cried, "she has come!"

The princess could not answer with distinctness, for the tip—the least little bit of the tip—of her tongue was gone. There was a reason for that, with which her husband was concerned, but she was a very happy woman, all the same, and her deep eyes glowed as she ran to the sheltered porch. She arranged the big screen before the bed, and she called Pyramus Lee to bring all the oil stoves from the wagon, and she set the excited chies and chals to running on errands.

Then the prince brought in the unconscious Anna and they tucked her tenderly between the soft, sweet blankets. She lay moaning for hours, for she was in great pain, and Auntie Alice Lee attended her as skillfully as any doctor could have done. The prince knelt at the head of the bed, whispering, but he could not be sure that his love heard, and every so often he would ask Auntie Lee if he had not better get the gorgio doctor, but the silent, efficient, little old lady shook her head. She had brought all the children of the tribe into the world, since her twentieth year, and she knew what she was doing.

Toward evening, all the tribe, wrapped against the cold, silently ringed around the outside of the porch, so still that not even the rustle of a dried leaf betrayed them. About that time, a gorgio doctor would have given Anna an opiate, but Auntie Alice Lee sent out word:

"Shoon a gillie, a lubbenly gillie."

So, with muted voices, they sang a love song. All the wonderful voices of the tribe, famous among their people, sent whispering into the still, winter woods something which was a lullaby and a prayer and a cry of adoring and passionate love. Far away, across an intervening ridge, around their evening lamp, within four stifling walls, the family of Van Duyne heard and felt the hair rise upon their heads.

But Anna ceased to moan. She gripped two strong and burning hands which laid hold on her, and she soared away on the wings of the Romany love song, while her son was born.

She knew that tender fingers stroked her. She felt herself kissed on forehead, mouth, and breast. She was aware that a woman, an old, sweet woman whose soothing, strengthening voice she had been hearing for so long, held something cool to her fever-cracked lips, but she could not open her eyes. She was too tired. Her hearing was acute, though, as it often is in great weakness. And above her head, there began the intoning of a strange ritual.

"Whose son is this?" Alma Dye—that. Anna had known her since she was a little girl.

"He is mine." Ah, ah, that voice!

"Is he welcomed?"

"He is welcomed and adored. He is the blood of my heart."

"Who dukkers for the newborn? Who speaks the dread word of the future for this new son of the Kaulli?"

"I do."

Uncle John Lane. Anna had a sudden inner vision of his pure, sweet old face, and the tears which had been gathering under her eyes rushed out. Some one—ah, ah—that some one through whom she had suffered so much, stooped and drank the bitter drops as they fell, in kisses which trembled.

Again the silky old voice. Anna did not open her eyes, but some vague

movement over her head told her that old John had taken the child.

"I dukker for the newborn. He shall be partly of the gorgios, for he is already half one, and his place among them shall be high, but in our hearts he shall be enthroned. He shall be a voice amongst the gorgios, to speak of the wisdom of the Romany. He shall be a voice in the wagons, to teach us much that we must know. He shall be a chief and carry The Box of Meanings, and his mother shall grow young when she hears his laughter."

Anna fell into deep and peaceful sleep before all those words were said. She awoke with an arm beneath her, and a face laid against hers.

"Beloved, it was the only way," said the prince. "You would never have come to me from your people otherwise. Do you feel able to see the clergyman? He has come to marry us."

He was an old, mellow, wise man, was the Reverend Thomas Watson. He said the few simple words and blessed the kneeling tribe, who filled the little porch. He was used to them. Several times each year, they came, in a body, to attend the Sunday morning services, and he believed that many of them were sincere Christians.

"Isn't it dangerous to have the mother and child outdoors in this weather?" he asked, as he shook hands with old John.

"God bless you for coming, brother," said John Lane. "You see, we had to have her outdoors. No child of ours is ever born within four walls. Besides, no one may dukker for the newborn in a house or wagon. It would offend Those."

He was really wise, that little village preacher. He pressed old John's hand.

"The peace of God be on you and on your house, brother," he said. "I wish that all my flock were as open to His grace as you."



The Amiable Madame Rambeau

By George B. Jenkins, Jr.

ALEXANDRE wore a boutonnière in the lapel of his coat, and a small, dainty mustache on his upper lip. His clothes were the product of a fashionable tailor, and his cane a trifle that he twirled in a debonaire, nonchalant way. Each afternoon he sipped his absinth at one of the small tables on the sidewalk in front of the Café Victor Hugo, and watched the crowds pass.

As he sipped calmly from the thin glass, he watched the people who strolled by. He was constantly on the alert for the sight of a pretty face, a girl who would be sufficiently lovely to intrigue, one amiable enough to smile in his direction.

Later in the afternoon, on his way to *déjeuner*, his eyes roved over the pedestrians, looking for an encouraging glance, for the saucy lift of a penciled eyebrow, for a quick smile that would mean many things.

In the evening he strolled carelessly about the boulevards, eagerly watching for a flirtatious and desirable girl, who would see in him a chance for adventure.

Unfortunately, Alexandre did not appeal to the kind of women who make casual acquaintances. He was well dressed, but he was neither dashing enough to look dangerous, nor stolid enough to look safe. He was of the unhappy many that are compelled to

listen to Rabelaisian anecdotes and who cannot truthfully tell of their own experiences.

For blocks, he would follow a pretty girl, keeping always two feet behind her, and never managing to acquire enough courage to speak to her.

He would walk slowly along, looking into each face as it passed, and smile half-heartedly at the attractive ones. After they had passed, he would become embarrassed and keep looking rigidly ahead, too timid to turn and see if the girl had glanced over her shoulder. For weeks he haunted the brightly lighted streets, never smiling at a girl who did not appeal to his particular ideal of beauty. For weeks he searched eagerly for a response from a girl who looked alluring, who looked exclusive, and who did not look mercenary.

A girl signaled vainly to a taxicab. Alexandre saw her standing with upraised hand, her figure a silhouette against the pale-gray asphalt. He walked calmly toward her, his heart pumping as he came close. She was beautifully gowned. An air of wealth, of breeding, of aloofness hovered about her.

A roaring sounded in his ears. Was this exactly the sort of girl he wanted to meet? Was she pretty?

His question was answered as she turned. Her lower eyelids were horizontal, and her eyebrows formed two

sides of a perfect triangle. The contour of her face was oval; her mouth red, well formed and distinct. Again he looked at her eyes, and lost himself in their depths. He felt as though he was in an airship over a bed of quicksand. Unconsciously, he took a deep breath, and sighed.

She heard him, and a white line showed between her lips. She studied him appraisingly, and beckoned. He walked toward her like a man in a dream, and found himself shaking hands.

"*Mon cher ami*," she breathed, "I am so glad to see you. Will you hail a taxicab for me?"

Alexandre smiled a quick smile that twitched the ends of his mustache. Her voice was clear and low, its soft tones thrilled him mysteriously.

"*Certainement!*" he replied vivaciously. "I shall be most happy to be of service to mademoiselle."

Hat in hand, he stood on the curb, hoping that hours would elapse before a taxi passed. The girl inserted a small hand within his arm, and watched him trustfully. Alexandre glowed with pride in his companion. She was exactly the type that appealed to him. One had only to see her to know that she was of the aristocracy, that she moved in the upper stratum of society.

A feeling of timidity approaching fear took possession of him. Had he been too *rapide* in his acceptance of the situation? Had he acted with the *aplomb*, the *finesse*, that she expected under the circumstances?

He glanced quickly beneath the brim of her hat, and was rewarded with a dazzling smile. A gentle pressure on his arm was further evidence that his manner had been correct. His diffidence began to leave him under such unmistakable evidence that he was making a favorable impression.

He gathered his courage and spoke.

"Must mademoiselle go home? Is a taxi necessary?"

The ends of her mouth curved slightly as she replied.

"Not mademoiselle. I am madame."

So she was married! This complicated the matter. If her husband should see them and demand an explanation. That would be tragic! Yet there were compensations that prevented this aspect of the matter from becoming alarming. Alexandre was youthful, strong, and of good physique. He was proficient with a revolver. In a dangerous position he would acquit himself bravely. And mademoiselle, or rather madame, was lovely! He was willing, anxious, yes, enraptured, even if he should be challenged to fight a duel. Early morning, the pale-green grass sparkling with dew. Her husband, an ominous figure, waiting for the word to fire, and he, Alexandre, gay, self-possessed, nonchalant, jesting with his seconds. The husband fires, and Alexandre staggers and falls to the ground. It is a bullet wound in the shoulder, serious but not fatal. Mademoiselle—no, madame—nurses Alexandre through the crisis and—

"There's a taxi!"

She seemed a bit indifferent whether she had a taxi or not. Alexandre waved his hat at the swiftly passing machine, and it slowed up at the curb. As they started toward it, he asked the questions again.

"Must madame go home? Is a taxi necessary?"

She hesitated a moment indecisively. Evidently there was some reason why she must take a car at once. Alexandre wondered whether it was because she was compelled to keep an engagement, or— There were many reasons why she should take a taxi. And only one, the he knew of, that would make her change her plans. That reason was—himself! He longed, wistfully, for the

proper words, the clever and sophisticated phrase, the airy bit of nothingness, that would persuade the girl to change her destination.

"I am sorry," she murmured contritely. "There are some things that make it imperative for me to go home immediately. Merely a household duty that will require five minutes of my time, but which must be done."

He gallantly assisted her into the machine and stood reluctantly at the open door. An expression of regret lingered on his face. The adventure had begun so promisingly, and now— She saw that he was disappointed, and she understood and sympathized. Her hand touched the leather seat by her side.

"You might like to go a little way with me," she suggested.

Alexandre accepted her invitation with alacrity. In this way he would discover her address. Once that information was gained, he would send her flowers, with a brief but passionate note attached; he would stroll in the neighborhood and catch a glimpse of her as she left her home, he would—

The taxi had not moved. Alexandre felt the chauffeur's impassive, questioning gaze upon him. With difficulty he forced his eyes to look elsewhere than at madame. What was the matter with the imbecile who drove the machine? Madame was a picture of patrician indifference. Why did they remain in this spot?

"Proceed," Alexandre ordered, mentally consigning the idiot to Hades.

"Monsieur's destination?"

"Oh." Alexandre lifted an inquiring eyebrow to madame. She gave the address quickly.

As the taxi sped shrieking down the street, Alexandre descended to the depths of despair. Madame had deliberately neglected to give an address expecting that he, Alexandre, would have a more fitting destination on the tip of his tongue. Yet the situation had not

completely passed beyond control. There was still a chance, still reason for hope. Alexandre determined to await such an opportunity.

They chatted casually about many things—the last revue at the Théâtre Français, a new book by Henri Barbusse, the political situation. He strove to make himself agreeable and soon became confident that he was clever. She considered his opinions sound and his comments humorous. Alexandre twisted the ends of his mustache and flung captivating glances toward his fair companion. The ride was delightful!

The taxi turned in between two gray-stone pillars and followed a curving pathway to the house. Madame lived in an imposing graystone structure of massive dimensions. Winding pathways wandered enticingly through the grounds, disappearing in the carefully tended underbrush, or rising to pass over a small stream that watered the flowers. A gardener could be seen in the distance.

The taxi stopped in midflight, and Alexandre opened the door. Madame alighted and walked quickly up the steps and turned; waiting for him. She had not bid him adieu, so he quickly paid the chauffeur.

"You will pardon me for a moment?" she asked, leaving him in a small reception room.

Alexandre lit a cigarette and strolled over before the fireplace where a tiny spark of flame flickered and sputtered.

The room was magnificently furnished in a costly and rather ornate fashion. A Louis XIII table, beautifully carved, reflected the gleam of the fire in its polished legs. The chairs were rare antiques that were obviously authentic and trustworthy. A squatting Buddha contemplated nothingness, while before him a light burned dully. Alexandre dropped his cigarette ashes

into the hollow body of the Buddha, evidently there for that purpose.

The house was quiet and silent, save for an occasional faint footstep. Alexandre wondered whether he were to remain alone indefinitely. Then the door slowly opened and a maid entered, rolling a tea table before her.

"Madame will return in a moment," murmured the maid, rearranging the two cups, the small coffee percolator and a plate of tiny cakes. "Does monsieur desire anything? Madame suggests Benedictine."

"Her choice is charming." Alexandre allowed his eyes to wander over the maid. She was young and pretty in a saucy, impudent way. He stroked his dainty mustache while she was in the room. She seemed much impressed.

Madame did not appear. Alexandre walked restlessly around the small room, wondering if he should go, and knowing that he was expected to remain. If she had wished him to go, she would not have sent the maid in with the tea table. On the other hand, if she wished him to remain, why did she not return?

His mind was set at rest by the entrance of madame. She had employed the intervening moments in changing her gown, and Alexandre was more charmed than ever. She wore an afternoon dress that was a delight to the eye. It blended with the background of the room and harmonized beautifully, with her complexion and eyes. Alexandre was conscious of a thrill of delight when his eyes fell upon her. She fulfilled so perfectly his ideal of beauty, of appearance, of poise. Her manner was dignified without being distant, friendly without being forward. Alexandre was enraptured.

"My husband," she apologized, "my husband, unfortunately, is not at home."

Alexandre felt a twinge of regret that she was married. Still, this fact did

not lessen her charm. Through the door, which had been left open, he saw that the maid was lingering in the hallway. Was she spying upon her mistress? It seemed strange that his hostess had not closed the door after her.

"Do you expect him to return soon?" he asked.

"He can never be depended upon," she said, pouring out the coffee. From a small decanter, with silver filigree patterned upon it, she poured the proper quantity of Benedictine into a tiny glass.

"*Café et Benedictine*," he said, toying with his cup. "*Café et Benedictine*. A drink I love, made for lovers."

She sipped tentatively.

"Is monsieur in love?" Without warning she leaned across the narrow tea table, her lips provokingly near.

Alexandre cast wild glances toward the open door. He could see the edge of the maid's dress, and knew that she was listening. He felt as if he were being permitted to glimpse Paradise, but could not enter. He rose swiftly, and closed the door.

When he returned madame was standing near the fireplace, looking indifferently at the glowing sparks. An air of aloofness, of complete isolation, stood like a barrier between them. She contrived to create the impression that he had committed a *faux pas*, had been guilty of rudeness. Her change of attitude was complete; so complete that she seemed another woman, an entirely different personality.

His unthinking action, the quickness with which he moved to close the door had dispelled the romance of the moment: Their mutual understanding had dissolved, disappeared into thin air, and he felt as awkward as he had when he first met her.

The situation demanded a cigarette. He offered her one, and she shook her head and gestured toward the light burning in front of the Buddha. His

movements brought him nearer to her, and he stood close by her side. As he puffed his cigarette until it ignited, he was conscious of her classic profile, the movement of her bosom when she breathed, the faint fragrance of the indefinable perfume that surrounded her like an impalpable cloud. Prudence vanished. Timidity disappeared. In a second he had caught her in his arms.

Instantly the doorknob rattled, and the maid appeared. Alexandre swiftly assumed an expression of calm politeness, and puffed upon his cigarette. Madame had not moved.

"You may take away the tea table, Marie," his hostess said calmly.

The maid's face was impassive as she moved the tea table around and propelled it through the door. Alexandre did not know whether her unwelcome entrance was the result of chance, or because of his actions. It seemed uncanny, weirdly unbelievable that her appearance had not been caused by her knowledge of the happenings within the room. At the same time, she had completely concealed her knowledge, if she had been aware of the situation.

His hostess neither moved nor spoke after the maid had gone. Apparently she intended to ignore both his action and the maid's entrance. This left him still unaware of her emotions. He did not know whether he had committed an irreparable blunder, or behaved as he was expected to.

He could not remain in ignorance of his position. It was necessary, or rather imperative, that the situation be made clear at once. Suppose her husband should appear and she should explain what had happened? Alexandre shuddered at the possibility. Suppose she was not angry at his behavior? He searched her face, but found it expressionless. Alexandre was baffled.

He took her hand nonchalantly, and began to stroke it. Her hand was passive and unresponsive. Warm and soft,

it stayed quietly in his, while he touched its white surface.

"Madame," he breathed amorously, "*je vous adore*—"

A knock sounded on the door, and a butler entered.

"Monsieur Rambeau," he announced, as a short, stout man, wearing a frock coat entered the room. Rambeau's quick eyes looked keenly at Alexandre, and took in the details of his attire. An expression of anger showed for a fleeting moment on his face. His wife greeted him smilingly, yet Alexandre thought he detected that she was not pleased at her husband's entrance.

"Monsieur LeForge, this is my husband," said Madame calmly.

Alexandre's heels came together with a click and he bowed from the waist. Rambeau acknowledged the introduction with equal formality. For a moment there was silence.

"I regret," said Alexandre, "I regret that I may not linger and have the pleasure of becoming better acquainted with Monsieur Rambeau."

"It is unfortunate," the husband said briefly.

"I was on the verge of departure," Alexandre explained.

Though he would not have gone for hours, if her husband had not arrived, Alexandre tried to imply that the necessity for leaving wounded his soul.

"I trust I shall have the honor of meeting monsieur and madame again."

Alexandre bowed, Rambeau bowed, and madame extended her hand. Alexandre touched it with his lips, and walked quickly from the room. He waited in the reception hall for the maid to arrive with his hat and stick.

Rambeau came to the threshold of the room and spoke to Alexandre.

"Will Monsieur LeForge wait for a moment? I have something I wish to say to him."

Alexandre agreed, for there was no alternative. He could not go without

his hat and stick, and the maid had not returned with them. A low-voiced conversation took place in the next room. Perhaps Rambeau was insisting that his wife tell how she met Alexandre. While he was considering a rapid and undignified escape, the door opened and Rambeau reappeared.

"I need scarcely say, monsieur," Rambeau began, "that you have been surprised by my wife's behavior." Alexandre began to breathe easily. Evidently madame had not been obliged to explain. He thought it wise to agree. If he was expected to be surprised, it was safe to admit that he had been.

Her husband continued.

"She is constantly watched, but sometimes she manages to elude our vigilance. You will, of course, be careful not to mention any of the incidents that have occurred in my home this afternoon. She is not wholly responsible for her actions."

Alexandre expressed his sympathy. It was truly unfortunate that so lovely a lady should be so afflicted. Her husband escorted Alexandre to the door, and deftly managed to slip several articles into Alexandre's coat pocket.

"I shall naturally say nothing," Alexandre said. "It would be most embarrassing if this should become known."

"Her mind is affected," Rambeau's

voice was grave and solemn. "At times she is normal, and then——"

He finished the sentence with a sigh.

Alexandre departed, twirling his cane and stroking his tiny mustache. This was an inglorious ending for his adventure! He remembered their conversation in the taxi. Surely then she had been perfectly normal, perfectly sane.

His right-hand pocket bulged oddly. He put in his hand and drew out the contents. Here was his purse, his watch, and his scarfpin. How had they come there? He never put his purse in that pocket, and his watch—— *That* had been attached to a chain on his vest! The scarfpin—Alexandre could not conceive of an explanation for its being in the pocket of his coat.

In the reception room of his home, Rambeau, with a glitter in his eyes, was speaking to his wife.

"You *must* be more careful!" he was saying angrily. "We *cannot* trifle now with insignificant game. I'm in a very delicate position just now, those oil stocks are just about to be put on the market and—if you bring us to the notice of the police, we will be ruined! Don't you see that we can't trifle with petty larceny when there are millions of francs coming to me? Don't you realize that, my pretty pigeon?"



THE TRAVELER

I DO not know where I have been,
 Though I have traveled much and far;
 I saw no more than do the blind
 To whom this world's an alien star.

Nay, I malign our lovely earth
 That you have made a holy place.
 Land, ocean, sky gave back but you
 And the bright beauty of your face!

HARRY KEMP.



More Super-Women

By Anice Terhune

Therèsè Humbert:

Of the \$20,000,000 Mystery.

IN the Avenue de la Grande Armée, in Paris, in the late eighties, stood a house, before which crowds were always collecting. No matter what the time of day might be, passers-by invariably stopped to point at its forbidding windows, to nudge one another and whisper, craning their necks for a chance glimpse at its inmates.

It was not a pretty house. Its architecture was hopelessly ugly and gloomy. The tall windows seemed always to blink their eyes cynically at the curiosity-seekers below. But the windows kept their secret, if they had one. The mansion remained shrouded in mystery, telling no tales of what went on inside its walls.

Many rumors were afloat; strange yarns about the place were started from time to time; no one knew how or by whom. For twenty years this sphinx-like domain kept Paris in a fever of excitement.

Inside the house were two objects of all-absorbing interest, and of equal mystery. One was a safe, built into the wall. The other was a dark-faced, black-eyed woman. Together, they managed to convulse Paris.

Here is the story:

It began in Toulouse. The heroine was a gypsy girl named Thérèse Daurignac. After she discovered that she was a super-woman, she changed her name to D'Aurignac, thinking it

smacked more of the aristocracy. But when the story begins, she was plain Thérèse Daurignac.

Her parents were gypsies, after the type of those one sees at Atlantic City and such places, selling lace and drawn-work. They kept a linen shop, to which Thérèse's shining black eyes attracted many a buyer. Those who came were wont to linger to talk to the clever daughter of the shopkeeper.

Among the rest, one youth came oftener, and lingered longer, than the others. He was Frederic Humbert, and he lived over the shop. He had not much money with which to buy linen, but he managed to make himself most agreeable to Thérèse. He was the son of an impecunious lawyer, and so not much of a catch. But he was miles above Thérèse in station, and her far-seeing eyes beheld great possibilities for them both—possibilities that were destined to be realized a thousandfold.

No Arabian Nights tale was ever more extravagantly unbelievable than the true story of this strange pair.

There was something about the girl which attracted scores of admirers, even at that early age. But she turned her back on them all, and exerted her lures for Humbert's exclusive benefit.

When Frederic declared his love for Thérèse, no one was interested enough to object. So the two were married.

At first, they were as poor as church

rice." Often, they did not know where their next meal was coming from. But Thérèse was resourceful. She always found a way to keep the wolf from the door.

Then Frederic's father, Gustave Humbert, suddenly rose to be minister of finance. From that time the young couple also rose with meteoric swiftness. Thérèse was hand in glove with her father-in-law. Immediately after he got his fingers on the public funds, a great banking house failed. At almost the same moment, the young couple began to live in luxury.

Unpleasant questions were asked. But these were always blandly and convincingly answered by Thérèse. She used to quiet the murmurs, by telling of an eccentric old uncle in Portugal, who owned ships by the score, vineyards by the hundred acres, and "three per cents"—best of all things in French eyes.

The couple moved to Paris, and bought the house at 65 l'Avenue de la Grande Armée, and Thérèse made her début in French society. Once launched, she dashed into the wildest extravagance. Her gypsy beauty and charm instantly carried the young wife to the top of the social wave. She became the most talked-of woman in Paris. Frederic appeared like a snuffed-out candle beside his electrically brilliant wife. But he did not care; as long as Thérèse continued to bring him fame and fortune, particularly fortune.

At the pace they were going it soon became evident that more money must be had from somewhere.

So Thérèse knit her black brows in thought, and called on her Romany gods.

Presently, these deities dropped a great estate in the rich wine country into her lap. She bought this, it was true, but there were to be monthly payments. Only one payment was made.

There were cries of "Fraud!

Fraud!" on all sides. Legal actions were raised. Thérèse had a story ready to meet each cry of "Fraud," and as fast as the legal actions came in, they were dropped into the waste basket of the minister of finance.

The grumblings ceased. The Humberts bought two country estates. This fixed them on firm ground. Thérèse began to take account of stock. By her wit and wonderful managing she had landed herself, her husband, and her father-in-law on the top rung of the social ladder. They had arrived, in every sense of the word. They were invited everywhere. People were disposed to forget their shaky past, or to believe entirely in Thérèse's version of it.

It was now time to reform—to turn honest; the arch-schemer decided it. Aristocracy opened its doors. Her social career became one of dazzling splendor.

Then, in 1883, came an event that set all France to talking again, and put the final mark of success upon the Humberts. Robert Henry Crawford, a New York multi-millionaire, died at Nice. Because as a girl, in Toulouse, she had once nursed him through a bad illness, his entire fortune of \$20,000,000 was bequeathed to Thérèse Humbert. "Had it not been for Thérèse, I would have died during that Toulouse illness," the will stated. He "could never forget her loving, skillful care or the sympathy in her shadowy gypsy eyes." He seemed to consider the paltry sum of \$20,000,000 too small a return for everything she had been to him. However, it was all he had to bequeath; and like the Portuguese vineyard, it came tumbling with overwhelming suddenness into Thérèse's possession.

This romantic sequel to a generous girl's kindness toward an old man, appealed strongly to the emotional, warm-hearted French nature. But, almost at once, trouble appeared.

As soon as the will was probated, it developed that there were other claimants to the enormous fortune. The dead millionaire had left two nephews, Robert and Henry Crawford, who had offices at 1202 Broadway, New York City.

The Crawford brothers came forward with another will, dated the very same day as the one that gave Madame Humbert the \$20,000,000. The second will bequeathed the old man's estate to his nephews, and to Thérèse's twelve-year-old sister, Marie d'Aurignac, with only a goodly annuity to Madame Humbert.

This produced much confusion. In the midst of the mix-up, unpleasant stories were whispered about Thérèse and her aged benefactor. People here and there seemed to think the old man's explanation of his bequest hinted at a closer relationship between them than the words of the will mentioned. One woman declared that she knew of a sentimental attachment between the two, and offered to prove it. There were hints, too, with regard to Marie.

Thérèse never bothered to deny these tales. Such a huge fortune needs no apology, as she very well knew. The stories died a natural death, submerged in the interest everyone took in the outcome of the will contest.

Madame Humbert declared she had the right of way. The Crawford brothers declared that the will in their possession was the correct one, and that they would fight Madame Humbert to the last penny. It began to look as if no one would ever get the money.

Finally, the brothers dropped their grab-all attitude, and asked for a consultation. Madame Humbert graciously agreed. After much haggling, the following plan was decided upon. Until Marie should become of age, all the bonds, stocks and other securities comprising the \$20,000,000 fortune, were to be kept untouched in a huge safe

that was built into a room in the Humbert mansion. Legal consent for this was necessary. The minister of finance drew up the document and put the matter through safely. The great seals of the French courts were affixed to the safe.

Every one knew the story.

"There is where the hundred million franc fortune is locked up!" people used to say, when they passed the house.

Over and over again, burglars tried to rifle the safe. Their efforts were always in vain. The Humberts took the "white elephant" philosophically. The presence of the untouched and untouchable wealth in the house became a standing joke among the family and their acquaintances.

Little Marie came to live with her sister, and received the education proper to one who was to inherit so vast a sum of money. There was talk of the child's becoming the wife of one of the Crawford nephews when she should grow up. This seemed a very good way of keeping all the wealth in the family. The Parisians thought it a charmingly romantic solution of the riddle.

All this notoriety helped the Humberts both socially and financially. Thérèse had always been borrowing money. Now, with \$20,000,000 at her back, she had no trouble in getting people to lend. They fairly fell over one another in their eagerness to accommodate her, and thereby to put the heiress under obligations to them. She went to bankers, asked for large loans, and got all she asked for. The foremost banks in the country—even the mighty bank of France itself—lent her whatever funds she wished. Tradersmen vied with each other for her "credit custom." Whenever a financier happened to ask for a settlement of his account, it was at once arranged. There was always some more or less mysterious agent, who bought up the claim or induced its holder to wait a while longer,

If the Humberts had once lived extravagantly, they now launched out into almost regal luxuries. Thérèse became a patroness of art. She filled her town mansion and her splendid country seats with a wonderful collection of art treasures. She had a box at the opera. When she occupied it, as she generally did, the audience were nearly as much interested in getting a good view of Thérèse, as they were in seeing the stage.

She was always gorgeously arrayed. Her gowns were turned out by the most pricelessly artistic costumer. What Madame Humbert wore was bound to be the latest cry in clothes. Her frocks were invariably set off by exquisite jewels.

"Madame Humbert is wearing her emeralds to-night," people would whisper to each other. Or, "Look, she has on the famous Humbert pearls!"

As the years went on, Thérèse's husband was made a member of the Chamber of Deputies.

One of France's best lawyers was engaged, at an incredible salary, to raise successive loans on the safe of securities.

Occasionally, someone would become a bit nervous. Any such Doubting Thomas was always permitted to view the safe.

"What more do you want?" Thérèse would say, indignantly, pointing to the bulky iron mass. "I have given you my word; and you have seen the safe. Can you not trust me, until my sister comes of age? The seals of the French government are on the safe. It cannot run away!"

This argument never failed.

However, when the winsome Marie grew up, and each of the Crawford brothers in turn asked for her hand, the story went out that she turned her slender back on them both, and refused, quite firmly, to marry either one.

"I was not consulted in the first ar-

rangement," she was said to have argued, "so why should I marry, unless I feel so inclined?"

Both the Crawfords were much older than she. They were uninteresting; and she did not like either of them, anyhow. With her fortune, she could marry whom she chose. So she stamped her foot, tried to imitate Thérèse's firmness of manner, and said, "No!" This was not a family secret. Thérèse discussed it freely.

Here was a contingency no one had dreamed of. The Crawfords were furious. If one of them could not marry Marie, neither Marie nor her sister should have any share in the fortune! The brothers determined, by hook or crook—especially crook—to keep the whole thing. Litigation over the \$20,000,000 began again, and dragged slowly, with varying results, through the lower courts.

By this time the Humberts had borrowed about \$12,000,000. People were growing vaguely suspicious. The story was worn threadbare. There were more and more insistent demands for payment. Lawsuits over one claim or another were constant.

Through it all, Madame Humbert kept a smiling face, went about as usual, and adorned her costly opera box as splendidly as heretofore. She bore up bravely under the increasingly loud murmurs of her mob of creditors.

Then, one day, Parisian patience suddenly reached the breaking point. A warrant was issued for Madame Humbert's arrest. Litigation or no litigation, the creditors refused to wait longer. They intended they should be paid. A tradesman, Morel by name, to whom the Humberts owed \$26,000, obtained a legal order to open the safe. Accompanied by officers of the law, he stormed the gloomy fortress at 65 l'Avenue de la Grande Armée.

No one was there! The family had vanished, and had left no explanations

behind. However, there was still the wonderful safe. With trembling fingers the officers forced it open. Then they stood still, gaping. The safe contained a paste diamond—worth perhaps two dollars—an empty jewel case, a few copper coins, a collar button, and a mass of waste paper. That was all! This was the "security" on which \$12,000,000 had been borrowed!

In short, there had never been any fortune. Thérèse had never nursed old Mr. Crawford through the dangerous illness at Nice, because not only had there never been any "dangerous illness," but there had never been any "Robert Henry Crawford, New York multi-millionaire." The Crawford nephews had never so much as suggested marrying little Marie when she should come of age; because there had never been any "Crawford nephews."

The whole thing was a gigantic fake. It is one of the most extraordinary swindle schemes on record. For nearly twenty years the Humberts had lived in lavish splendor on nothing! They left a train of devastation behind them. Seventeen bankers, or companies, and countless smaller concerns had been their dupes.

All France was ablaze with excitement at the revelations. One ruined creditor killed himself. A large banking concern that had been floated by the Humberts, collapsed. Scores of poor people lost all their savings.

The Humberts were pursued, caught, and brought to trial on charges of swindling and forgery. In court, Madame Humbert's gypsy origin got the better of her. She shouted defiance at everyone, swore noisily that she was innocent, and shrieked coarse insults at the judge. The trial room often rang with the audience's derisive laughter at her outbursts. Ninety witnesses, in all, were subpoenaed. Strange to say, in spite of the conclusive evidence, the wrecked fortunes, the suicides and the

general havoc that Thérèse had created, she wielded a sort of hypnotic power, which caused some persons still to believe in her, or at least to condone her actions. Her fascinations made more than one poor victim side with her against himself.

For instance, there is the case of Roulina, the jeweler who had lent Thérèse 1,000,000 francs.

"I still think I shall be repaid," the poor simpleton said trustingly. "If not, I shall, at any rate, have had the satisfaction of serving a wonderful woman!"

Madame Humbert's plan had been so simple. That is why she had succeeded. To have conceived the idea of asking people to believe something so incredible—therein lay her amazing genius. To have got her hands on \$12,000,000, to have maintained country estates, a town house, a yacht, and a box at the opera—simply by estimating, to a hair's breadth, how far the credulity of the average man can be worked upon, was a marvelous achievement. Only a super-woman could have done it.

Thérèse had never advanced a penny on her own account. The nervous doubters had often been paid, it is true; but they had been paid with money borrowed from other creditors who were not nervous.

People like to believe that which it is hard to believe. She therefore asked them to believe something enormous. If she had said, "I have a thousand francs in securities," no one would have been interested. Much less would they have advanced her anything on them. So she said, "I have a hundred million francs." And everybody nibbled at the bait.

"Still," writes a commentator, "the master stroke of genius was the litigation." Thérèse had realized that a dispute was necessary. It was not enough for her to point to the safe. So she invented two other people to point to it

—the Crawford nephews. Eventually, she got everybody pointing to the safe, and wondering who would win. For twenty years she outwitted Paris.

The Crawford swindle would not have lived a week in America. On the Continent it is different. With supreme cleverness, Thérèse carefully made her benefactor an American. All the queer arrangements of the will were therefore put down, in the French mind, to "Yankee eccentricities."

"Finally," says the *Living Age*, "the greatest tragi-comedy of high finance came to an end. The trial was over, much to the sorrow of an interested and vastly amused public."

The defendants were found guilty. Madame Humbert and her husband

were fined, and were sentenced to five years' imprisonment. Thérèse's two brothers, convicted as accomplices—presumably they impersonated the Crawfords—received sentences of three and two years each.

Thérèse, though a criminal, a fugitive, and stripped of all her jewels and pretensions, still possessed her strange charm. She continued for a time to be the most popular woman in France.

She had saved millions of people from the dull anguish of boredom. She had given a whole nation something to talk about, to argue over, to laugh at. She had provided the cleverest and most startling sensation of the age.

Why should she not have held a place of her own in the public heart?

Next Month: The Empress Theodora



IN NOVEMBER

WITH autumn and the flaring leaves our love must end—
 Ere flauntful spring shall mock thy tears and my despair
 With blossoms red or pale, some April bride may wear;
 Now, while the weary, gray, forgetful heavens bend

Above the grief and languor of the dying lands,
 In one last kiss shall meet and mingle and expire
 The muted, last, remembering sighs of our desire;
 And on my face the flowerlike burden of thy hands

Shall rest a little, and be taken tenderly
 And, oh, how lightly hence! And in thy golden eyes,
 Thy love, and all the ashen glory of the skies,
 Shall mingle, and as in a mirror lie for me.

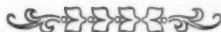
CLARK ASHTON SMITH.



Innocents at Large

By Nancy Boyd

Author of "The Seventh Stair,"
"Young Love," etc.



AT the corner of Thirty-first Street and the Avenue, Lucile ran into me, nearly knocking me into the arms of the bus starter.

"Oliver," she cried, happily, and quite as if she had not at that moment made an assault upon my person, "I think that this is fate!"

I straightened my tie with somewhat of reserve mingled with a trifle of grimness, and dusted my trouser with my stick.

"Very likely," I returned, "but which of them? There are three."

Whereat she made a—well, *you* know—that French word—at me.

"No, but listen," she said, collecting herself at once and placing her hands earnestly upon my shoulders, a little trick she has whenever she wishes to bring you to instant solemnity and entire submission.

"Lucile," I said sternly, becoming peach-colored as to the ears, "do you want to spend the week-end in the night court?" But she did not understand me, and I was forced to remove her bewildered fingers from my collar. "Don't cry," I said to her, however, as I did so—for they were very soft, and the little nails pricked me pleasantly; "don't cry that I give you back your pretty hands, Lucile. I do it only for your good; and it hurts me much, much more than it does you."

"Oliver, listen: come with me over to the Ritz while I check my Chow. Oh, but first—look. Do you see anything of Denny over there? They made him stick the car around the corner some place. There it is, 'way down by that purple woman. I can see the back of it."

"But how do you know it is your car?" I asked, as we walked in its direction. It has always been wonderful to me, the way people can tell one automobile from another. I have horses, and a motor boat.

"Oh," said Lucile, "it's perfectly simple. I can tell it as far as I can see it. If you look carefully at the window, Oliver, you'll notice that the shade's a little bit crooked. It always goes up that way."

"Oh," said I.

"Mr. Sidney Farquhar," I remarked, after a moment of silence, "is lunching at the Ritz to-day."

"Oh," said Lucile. "Well, I can check him at the Biltmore, I suppose. Who's he lunching with?" Mr. Sidney Farquhar is Lucile's husband.

"I don't know who she is," I replied. "A rather handsome person, wearing a—wearing something blue."

"Yes," said Lucile. "I know that hat; a horrid hat; red things on it."

I was silent.

"Red things on it?"

"M'm—yes, I dare say there were."

"Yes," said Lucile, "little red things; red—er—apples. Did Sid see you?"

"No, I think not. He was looking at the sunlight through a piece of toast, as I remember, when I passed their table."

"Huh!" said Lucile.

"And smoking a gray cigarette," I continued; "or rather, as you might say, taking it through a straw."

"Yes," said Lucile, "he takes everything that way. Sid's the sort of person buttonhooks were made for, and nutcrackers—can't do anything with his fingers or his teeth—the sort of person that—that really *uses* the olive spoon—*unconsciously*, I mean, *you* know. It's terrible. Did *she* see you?"

"Er—no," I said, "no. No, she did not. She was looking at the menu."

Apparently Lucile had not heard my reply. She was signaling her chauffeur. But when we were comfortably settled in the car—she on the wrong side, as usual, a silly trick she learned abroad and will not abandon, no matter how often you step on her shoes—when we were comfortably settled and free to resume our interrupted conversation, she turned upon me suddenly the concentrated and unfocused stare of startled reflection, then sank back into the corner.

"Ha!" she said, under her breath. "I'll bet she was."

The machine stopped. Denny reached back and opened the door.

"Do you want to come with me? Or will you wait here? I won't be a minute. Why, Oliver, I must have told him the Ritz, after all—just because I was determined not to. Isn't that funny? Well, never mind. They'll be still in the dining room. They wouldn't have finished yet, would they, Oliver? What do you think?"

"Why do you care where they are?" I suggested idly. "If a lidy cawn't check her Chow under the very legs

of her husband's luncheon table, where is progress, say I, and is there any God, or ain't there?"

"Why, I don't know that I *do* care, really," said Lucile. "I don't suppose I do. I hadn't stopped to think whether I did or not. I guess I don't. Come, Chu Chin!" She disappeared through the revolving door, and left me wondering for the thousandth time whether the thin, shiny bands one sees about the heels of ladies' shoes are really silver or just look like silver.

I had been thinking of Lucile for twenty minutes when she returned. As she crossed the pavement toward me, a certain lovely gayety about her, a sweet sophistication of grace in speech and movement, a general impression which she gave forth of a renewed interest and courage in life, informed me that she had spent these twenty minutes in a room filled with mirrors and other women, powdering her nose and doing to herself such other things as well as the observance of the ritual must have exacted from her. The change which she had undergone was not materially apparent, at least not to me, but in her spirit marvelously.

"And after all," I said to Lucile, as I got out of the car to help her in—a silly custom, as if she could not get in perfectly well by herself—"after all, Lucile, what is ritual for?"

"Home, James—I mean Denny," said Lucile, and giggled. She drew the rug up to her chin and hugged herself in a momentary delicious ecstasy.

"Oliver, what do you know?" she gurgled. "I lent her a safety-pin. She'd stepped into her hem, or caught her heel in it, or some such heavy thing. She is good-looking, though. I wonder if Sid really likes her. Bet he doesn't since she fell over her skirt."

"Lucile," I said, "why in the world are you going home?"

"Oh, I don't know. I don't know anything to-day, Oliver. I haven't the slight-

est idea what I'm doing. I was just dying to see you—you were the one person on earth that I wanted most to see—and meeting you the way I did sort of—or, I don't know. It does seem curious to go straight home after having carefully hung up my dog on a hook in a check room, doesn't it? I suppose Denny thinks I'm crazy; that is, if he ever thinks. He *must* think of something, mustn't he? But, Oliver, where else can we go? I want to talk to you. I have to. For two reasons. There is a nice dark place in the Museum of Natural History, but it seems to me they put you out at five."

"Ah," I cried eagerly, "are we to sit in the dark?"

Lucile patted my hand.

"No," she explained, "not necessarily. But it's easier to talk in the dark. I shan't all the time be thinking do you think I look well, or wondering how men ever happen to choose the particular ties they do. Besides—I may weep, or something."

"My Lord!" I said.

"I know it's getting dark," said Lucile, somewhat desperately, at five o'clock, rising from a fat gray-and-purple armchair and looking out through the heavy gray-and-purple curtains. "But it's not supposed to get dark so early in May, and if the afternoon's overcast, I'm sure I can't help it. I forbid you to turn on the lights, no matter how terrified you may become. You may light the fire, if you choose; that's different."

"It's very cold," I remarked, "for the time of year," and held a match to several edges of the crumpled paper. Then I resumed my seat; and waited for the second reason why Lucile had wished to talk with me.

She turned from the window suddenly, went over to the couch, and sat down.

"Come here, Oliver," she said, "and

sit beside me. What-I have to say next takes courage. You—you might even hold my hand."

I seated myself beside her; but instead of taking her hand, I went her one better, as you might say—I put my arm about her waist, for all the world as if she had been my daughter. I know I did the thing in just that way, because all the time I kept saying to myself:

"Remember, Nol, old chap, she is your daughter, your little, little girl, your only child."

"Oliver," then said to me the only woman I have ever really loved, "whatever I do in these next few weeks you mustn't misunderstand me," which is the *damnedest* thing a woman can say to a man.

"You see, Oliver—— And I guess you'd better take your arm away—Sid might not understand. No, on second thought, keep it there. You see, these weeks on your boat are going to be fearfully hard for me. I really love my husband; in spite of the fact that every single thing about him exasperates me to the point of fury, love him so much that if the first part of our plan doesn't work, if we don't succeed in—in making a man of him, I think I shall die. But on the other hand, next to Sidney, I love you—you're leaning too hard on your arm, aren't you, Oliver?—and to be with you so much of the time—and—especially since you run the boat yourself, and all that sort of thing, will be difficult, I'm afraid." She paused for a moment and then concluded, simply, "I do so admire men that really do things."

"You shame me," I said. "What do I do, ever—except the things I like to do? Nothing that is hard for me—nothing that I have to bring myself to do, you understand. Why, all those things you admire are as easy for me as—as the Greek aorist for Plato; I was brought up on them, you see; and

for that reason, my dear, it's not exactly fair. Besides"—I laughed; but I did not feel gay at all—"besides, if you really feel that you must love me—next to Sid, of course, that being always understood—I'd rather have you love me for my money, say, or my family, or—or even for my hair."

"Dear Oliver," said Lucile, patting my cheek.

And just then her husband came up the stairs and into the room.

Sidney Farquhar has always reminded me of the poet in "Man and Superman," the sort of person "who moves among people as most people move among things." He entered the room exquisitely; yet I am sure he thought himself entirely alone, for the room—a fact which I observed for the first time as he entered it—was almost completely dark.

"Hello, Sid," said Lucile.

"Ah," said he, and paused.

"Come on in," said Lucile.

"How are you, Farquhar?" I brought forth with somewhat belated heartiness, rising and holding out my hand.

"Oh, is that you, Judson? How are you?" He shook hands with me. The warm, generous grip of his hand filled me, as it always did, with a sense of incongruity, the feeling I get when a woman shakes hands well.

"Come on in, why don't you?" Lucile invited him again.

"Thank you. I was merely about to look for a book I want. I'm going out again directly."

He went swiftly across the room to the bookshelves on the opposite side.

"For Heaven's sake, turn on the light, Sid, if you're after a book!"

"No, no. There's no need. I assure you. I know it by the shape quite as well."

Lucile leaped to her feet with an exasperated exclamation and pushed the button.

He looked at her questioningly, with the book in his hand.

Then he laid the book on a table, fitted a cigarette from his case into the long, slender holder which he always had with him, and lighted it carefully, by drawing the flame of the match toward it. After which he picked up the book again and began to turn the leaves.

"Benvenuto Cellini," he mused. "What a lovely name!"

There was a slight pause.

Then, "Michaelangelo is a lovely name, too," Lucile retorted, almost sharply, "and *he* did *big* things, cathedrals and things, not just inkstands and saltcellars!"

"Why, I thought it was Cellini," said I, innocently, after another slight pause, "who designed Grant's tomb." But nobody laughed.

Sidney turned the leaves of the book for a moment.

Then he lifted his eyes, and looked intently at Lucile.

"I seem not overmuch to please my love," he said, like the first line of a sonnet. "Well, *rivederci*," He crossed to her suddenly, lifted her hand to his lips, bowed to me, and left the room.

Lucile threw herself weeping into my arms.

"Oh, my God, Oliver," she sobbed. "I adore him! I worship him! I wish he were dead! I wish he were dead!"

That evening I went to see my aunt, who knows everything.

She was playing chess against herself.

As I entered the room, she held out her hand, without raising her eyes from the board.

"Hello, Nollie. Sit down and be quiet for a second. I'm working out the sixth move ahead."

There was silence for fifteen minutes.

Then she moved the white bishop one square, and turned.

"All right, dear. Now we'll have tea."

Whereupon she summoned her maid and ordered coffee.

"Aunt Bill, who's the big girl Sid Farquhar plays around with lately? Wears a blue hat with little red things on it—red apples."

Aunt Bill was on her knees under the reading table, hunting for the kaleidoscope. She arose, dusting it with a corner of the Japanese brocade with which the table was covered.

"Her name is Phoebe Wheeler," she said. "Here's your plaything, child."

I began idly turning the kaleidoscope.

"Her father was Dan Wheeler, the big cattle man," my aunt resumed, "that got shot about four years ago by a sheep rancher, out in Valdez, New Mexico—man named Barnes or Burns—some such name—Barnes, it was, Clif Barnes. She runs the ranch herself now. The Barnes man was found dead himself about a month later in a little cañon near his place; and they say she shot him. But nobody knows, and nobody inquires. I guess she did, all right. She looks as if she might have."

"H'm," said I, turning the kaleidoscope into another design. "Lord, this is lovely! Wish you could see it, Aunt Bill. It's almost all blue and violet, and it's shaped like four of those big moths—you know. There—it's gone! It makes me sick to think I'll never see it again—loveliest thing I ever saw! Here, take this, I'm no good while I have it in my hands."

"You didn't hear a word I said," remarked my aunt, without any bitterness at all.

"Oh, yes, I did," said I, "every word. But as if you were speaking Spanish, or something. I had to sort of translate to myself as you went along. How long has Sid known her?"

"Only since—let me see—since two weeks ago Friday night," replied that surprising woman. "I saw them when they met. I'd got your uncle out of bed and walked him over to the Brevoort with me to celebrate the end of a game I'd been working at for nearly six days—"

"How is Uncle Bill?" I interrupted, dutifully.

"Spineless as ever," said my aunt. "And Sid was there, alone. He pretended not to see us when we came in, so I knew he didn't want to be disturbed, and I sat your uncle down with his back to him. Some people have a superstition that just because they know a man they have to speak to him every time they see him, and it makes your uncle nervous as a witch for a week to do something he's never done before. He's not alone in that, either, by any means. Most men are just exactly alike, I find, except that some are a little stupider than others. They all live by habit, and when something happens that interferes with one of their habits, they have to stop and think for themselves for a minute, and it makes them nervous. The more I see of men, the more I wonder they get as far as they do."

"Well, as I was saying"—she struck a match and gave us each a light—"Sid was sitting all alone, at a table in the corner. There was nobody else there that I knew. All of a sudden, in one of those queer lulls in the conversation that are supposed always to occur at twenty minutes past something or other, a girl's voice said, 'No, mine was a straight rye. I don't take water with it.' And everybody in the room turned to watch Miss Phoebe Wheeler swallow her whisky at a gulp without blinking and resume her conversation. The next thing I knew the man she was with had got up and gone over to Sid's table and brought him back to meet her. Sid and he were classmates

at college, I gathered from their conversation—as if that meant anything! That's another queer thing. A man may be the greatest blackguard on earth, but just because he happened to belong to the same whachermaycallit as another man, he can take the other man's sister riding in a taxi, and no questions asked. But there! Anyway, here comes the coffee. Flick it on the floor, dear; it's much easier. When your uncle gets a house so grand I can't put ashes on the floor without feeling self-conscious, I'll leave him. It'll be a good excuse."

"Aunt Bill," I said, "do you know Miss Wheeler? Could you possibly get her to spend a week on my boat with you and me and Sidney and Lucile and anybody else you want?"

She looked at me for a moment out of the corner of her eye.

"Sure," she said. "But just why, Oliver? Oh, well, never mind; you needn't tell me. I'll find out."

Whereupon we drew our chairs closer together, and laid plans for a cruise on the *Greasy Joan*.

"Why don't you come in, too, Mr. Farquhar?" Miss Wheeler came from the after cabin in a red bathing suit, twisting a stocking below her knee.

Sidney rose from a deck chair, exquisite in white flannels. I rose from the deck, very unprepossessing indeed, with my long, thin, hairy legs and trunks that had faded away from the color of my jersey.

"I should like to," said Sidney, wistfully. "But I don't know how to swim."

"Can't you swim at all?"

"No. Not at all. But if you'll teach me, I'll do anything at all you say."

"Are you afraid of the water?"

"Why, yes, I suppose so. I dare say anybody is who can't swim. It looks very green indeed and entirely un-

friendly. But I'll do exactly as you tell me to do. It really won't trouble me at all."

"Sid, what are you going to do?" Lucile lifted her head suddenly from a heap of dark rugs on the forward deck.

"I don't know yet. Something very amusing, I think, and possibly uncomfortable. Whatever Miss Wheeler tells me. Has anybody anything I can wear?"

"Oliver, get Sid that extra suit you brought," said Lucile, a bit uncertainly.

In a few minutes he was standing at the top of the swimming ladder, dressed in the well-fitting green garments his wife had selected for him before we left town and entrusted to my care.

Miss Wheeler called up to him from the water, in which she seemed to be standing upright, doing nothing.

"Now, Mr. Farquhar, bend over at the waist till you're nearly double, take a deep breath, lose your balance, and fall in."

"Oliver, he'll kill himself! He can't swim a stroke! It's cruel!" Lucile scrambled from the deck and caught me by the arm.

"Lucile," I said sternly, in her ear, "what's the matter with you? Do you want to make a man of your husband, or don't you?"

"I don't want to make a dead man of him! Don't let him do it!"

But Sidney was already over the side. What went on in his mind before he actually released his hold on this earth and let himself go head first into the ocean, I can't imagine. I was a child when I learned to swim, and the water in which I learned was not above my shoulder.

He went very flat, of course.

When he came up, Miss Wheeler was right beside him.

"Put your hand on my shoulder," she said; which he did, and gratefully enough, I'll give my oath, although not

before he had said, "Thank you," rather inarticulately, and smiled at her.

"Did it hurt?" she asked.

He looked at her without speaking, then up at the broad side of the boat, over the rail of which Lucile and I were leaning, staring at him, then back at his teacher.

"Now that I have learned to dive," he said, gravely, "how does one swim?"

Whereupon we all laughed very loudly. I dove into the water with a force that rocked the boat for some seconds afterward, and Lucile went shakily down into the forward cabin to make herself a seltzer lemonade.

That afternoon we waited in vain for Andy to come back with the dinghy. Andy is the boy who tends the boat and does the errands. He had gone ashore for ice.

"Aunt Bill gets in at three-thirty," I said, "and it's three-twenty now. If there's nobody there to meet her, she'll go off somewhere else, or something. Where is that devil of a kid?" I stared over at the slip for five minutes longer, then reluctantly straddled the rail and prepared to swim ashore for the dinghy.

"Mayn't I come, too?" It was Phoebe Wheeler, at my elbow.

"By all means!" said I, glad of companionship; and we swam in pleasantly side by side, matching our strokes, in perfect silence, except that once I said, "There's a jelly-fish. Come over this way a little," and once she said, "Did you get that warm streak just then?"

We found the dinghy at the slip where the boy had left it, the oars standing up untidily in the rowlocks, and the stern full of flat mud in which were sticking a clam digger and four dead clams. I cleaned it out as best I could with the aid of a gritty sponge and a bent tomato can from the bow.

"It doesn't matter much, anyhow," I said. "Aunt Bill always comes in overalls."

And sure enough, just as I spoke, there she stood on the slip, clad in brown sneakers, a sagging white piqué skirt spotted with iron rust, a broad-brimmed hat with a gayly striped elastic band, and an enormous middy blouse.

She stepped heavily, but capably, into the boat and stowed herself away in the stern.

When we came within hailing distance of the *Greasy Joan*, she called to Lucile, who was pinning Sidney's bathing suit to the awning, alongside a flapping bath towel.

"Lucile, go get your old godmother a cup of coffee, child!"

Lucile waved to her, and went below, standing aside for Sidney, who was just emerging from the forward cabin.

"Sid," I called, "put the steps over the side, will you? There's nothing down but the swimming ladder."

"Sid, it's a marvel to me," said Aunt Bill, as she scrambled up the steps, "how you keep so tidy in those togs, scrubbing down the decks the way you do, and cleaning the engine!"

Sidney smiled lovingly and put his arms about her, whispering something in her ear.

"No, can you really?" cried Aunt Bill, patting him. "Well, well, you're a pretty smart boy."

I followed Lucile below to help her make the coffee. She can't make coffee.

When the alcohol flame was burning strongly in the little marine stove and the percolator was sliding gently back and forth with the rocking of the boat which comes at the turn of the tide, Lucile pulled me down beside her on the leather-cushioned bunk in the cabin.

"Let's sit here till it perks," she said.

After a moment she leaned her head against my shoulder.

"Oliver," she said, "I watched you as you swam inshore. There was something about you that just thrilled

me—the way your arm reached out, and the way you put your face down in the water, and the way the muscles in your shoulders moved. Oh, it made me faint, it was so beautiful! I didn't dare to watch you, and I couldn't take my eyes off you—I didn't lose sight of you for a minute till you went around the pier."

She closed her eyes now, and her head dropped back over my arm.

I looked down, at her face so near to me, the tiny light curls about the forehead, the three freckles that day's wind had laid across her cheek, the lovely mouth, a little weary, slightly parted.

And suddenly the walls of the cabin began to go round and round, the two portholes opposite me, of which one was closed and the other open, began to change places with one another in rapid succession, blinking as they did so, and the lights in the ceiling glared down upon me through a thick, hot fog.

"It's perking," said Lucile, and left me.

I sat forward on the bunk, and dropped my head in my hands.

After a moment she returned and sat down on the bunk opposite.

"False alarm," she remarked, conversationally.

This banality, from Lucile, who was never commonplace, comforted me somewhat. She, too, had been conscious of the presence of great forces.

After a while I said: "As to that, Lucile, you should have watched Miss Wheeler. She has a far cleaner stroke than mine."

"Yes," said Lucile, "that's what Sid said."

Just then Aunt Bill came to the hatchway.

"Oliver," she called, "bring up the table, will you?"

"It's up there! Watch the coffee, Lucile."

I leaped up the stairs, dragged the

little wooden table with its two iron legs from under a pile of folded deck chairs and rugs, and installed it in its two round holes in the deck, just aft of the wheel. There Aunt Bill set up her chess game where she had left off, referring to a cryptic and untidy chart which she took from the pocket of her middy blouse. At five o'clock I took the table away from her, much to her indignation, and bore it off to the forward cabin, there to set it for supper.

"What's that about wild cats, Miss Wheeler?" I came up from the engine room later that evening with the leather cushion from one of the bunks, and flopped it onto the deck beside her. "Sit here; it's much softer."

She made herself comfortable on the cushion, and Sid tucked a heavy plaid rug about her.

"I was just telling Mr. Farquhar some bedtime stories," she said.

"But it's bedtime for us all," I protested. "Mayn't the rest of us listen?"

And we squatted there till long after midnight, or sprawled on the deck, propped by our elbows, hearing wonderful tales of the alien, incredible West.

Such words as "opera," "one-step," "cocktail," "taxi," "tip," were words of a different tongue from the tongue she spoke—from her vigorous vocabulary of "cattle," "horses," "cañon," "desert," "trail." She told us stories of big timber wolves—"lobos," she called them—cunning, elusive beasts, so few in number, so destructive, and so constant each to his own chosen locality as to be known by name in the villages and placed under a bounty of capture. She spoke of a poster she had seen, nailed up in a saloon in a little town in Arizona: "Five Hundred Dollars' Reward for the Capture Dead or Alive of Gray Daddy!!!"

"They got him, too," she said. "I saw him when they brought him in.

He was a big fellow. Measured eleven feet from his nose to the tip of his tail. Nobody believes it, but it's true. I measured him for myself to make sure."

She told us of a wild cat she had seen, trotting along in a cañon far below her, and shot at from above, nearly losing her life afterward in an attempt to reach it, sliding and scratching down the side of the cañon.

"Did you hit it?" asked Sid, speaking for the first time since supper.

"Yes," she replied. "He was dead when I got to him. Pure luck, of course; you couldn't be sure from such a distance, and at such a perpendicular range.

"Still," she added, simply, "I do hit most everything I shoot at." Aunt Bill and I exchanged glances.

Phoebe Wheeler took a little sack of Bull Durham and some slips of rice paper from her skirt pocket, distributed the tobacco evenly on one of the papers, closed the sack by pulling the string with her teeth, and rolled herself a very creditable cigarette, which she licked into adhesiveness with a deft, but pre-occupied tongue.

"I have to go back pretty soon," she said. "Got a letter this morning from my overseer, saying— Oh, perhaps you'd be interested to see it."

This also she drew from her pocket, a folded sheet of ruled paper, written in pencil, which read as follows:

P. WHEELER, NEW YORK. DEAR MISS: Last Sunday, the two deputies watching the pipe line caught Gilmore Sr. cutting a hole in the pipe, when told he was under arrest, he jumped on his horse and beat it. The deputies fired 7 shots, hitting Gilmore in the rump, the bullet going down his leg and making a bad wound and hitting the horse in three places. Gilmore made his escape to Douglas, where he was arrested by the police. Banks is away, but Jack Casey says we are sure to send Gilmore up. Young Gilmore was not mixed up in this job, but he is more guilty than his Dad. Every one that I have talked to and that is most of the rangers and cattlemen in these parts

claim that our troubles with the Gilmores have only started as they have a large number of relatives who will help them fight us. But no matter what this bunch tries to pull off I am going the limit with them. They will know they have been to a fight.

Yours,

PETZ

"I have to go back," said Miss P. Wheeler.

"Oh, but surely not soon!" cried Lucile.

"Well, I guess I can finish out this cruise. But I sort of want to see what they're up to out there."

Sid had not once taken his eyes from her face.

The next morning while Lucile and I were getting breakfast—"Sid's turn will come later," Lucile had said, "Sid's and Diana's"—Cap'n Dave Ames drew up alongside in his noisy launch, bringing Andy with him.

"Morning, cap'n!" I called, jovially, getting him the first time with an oyster cracker through the porthole. "Come on aboard and look her over. We'll start any time you say."

"Oliver, aren't you going to run it yourself?" Lucile turned to me, a half melon in either hand, their seeds dripping from them to the floor.

"Oh, I dare say I shall take the wheel once in a while," I said, not meeting her eyes, "but I don't want to have to be fussing with the engine all the time. Keeps you running up and down stairs like a chambermaid." I gulped, then finished, heroically, "Deuced untidy, too."

"Oh," said Lucile.

Presently she went up on deck with a spoon, or something.

"Well, that's done," I said to myself. "I guess I ain't no mighty man no more."

We cruised for four days, dropping anchor at night in some little harbor, there to fall asleep, after a lazy swim, to the sound of the water lapping the shore, or lie awake, to the sound of somebody else's Victrola. At the end

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of that time Sidney, brown as an Indian, or a berry, or any of those things which are brown, was following Phoebe Wheeler about as if he were a dog, or her shadow, or any of those things whose nature it is to accompany. Moreover, he was learning to swim. As for Miss Wheeler herself, she seemed quite contented with his society, never once during the whole time, so far as I could see, cursing at him or knocking him down. But Lucile, at the end of these four days, with compressed lips and unfocused vision, was polishing all that was brass aboard the boat; Aunt Bill had lost one of the black rooks overboard—foul work of a magazine cover lifted by the wind; Cap'n Dave was drunk and inspired horribly to song; Andy had cut his thumb rather badly on an oyster shell; and I had a feeling somehow that my party was not a success.

On the afternoon of the fifth day, when Sid and Miss Wheeler, after washing up the dinner dishes, had gone ashore in the dinghy with Andy and the cap'n, Lucile and I, in the act of dragging some cushions out upon the forward house, where Lucile had invited me to have a talk with her, paused amidships to see if Aunt Bill had made a move yet.

The men were exactly in the positions which they had occupied the evening before.

She sat with her chin on her fist, considering the board.

Suddenly, with a movement of her arm she swept the pieces off the board into her lap, and poured them from her lap into the box.

"Children," she said, "come here."

We stood for a moment without moving, then mutely sat down upon the cushions.

And she spake as follows:

"Lucile, you're losing your husband. And it's right that you should. You don't deserve him. But, on the other

hand, neither does he deserve you. You're a pair of ninnies. I don't know whether it's because I'm fond of you that I stick to you, or because I think you're fond of me. Which you probably aren't. Young people never like old people; they just protect them. And old people don't like young people; they just advise them. But never mind that. Lucile, you've been having a great time all to yourself, or maybe to Oliver, too, I don't know, probably, thinking how dissatisfied you are with your husband. Well, it's yourself you're dissatisfied with, mostly. You and Sid are just exactly alike, except for certain differences in anatomical construction which made it possible for you to marry—something you never should have done. But we won't go into that. You thought Sid was puny and spleeny and sissy, and you'd get him somewhere where he'd have to rough it, and make a man of him. And you thought while you were about it you might as well kill two birds with one stone, so you got Oliver to get me to get Phoebe Wheeler, too, aboard his God-forsaken, gold-and-mahogany floating palace of a greasy boat, where you could show her up, you thought, for what she was, a flat-floated ranch woman with red hands and a loud voice, who couldn't tell a cocktail shaker from a baby's bank. And the organdies and the satin skirts and the face powder and the silk stockings and the French heels and the Marcel waves you've carted about these decks are enough to make any man leave his wife and go to digging clams with a hussy. Not that there's anything the matter with the Wheeler girl; she's a nice girl, and if you had half her gumption, Lucile, you could be anything in the world you wanted to be, and make any man on earth sit up and take notice. Of course Sid fell for her. She's real. And all his miserable little life he's hankered for something real. Only he just never

had the sense to get up and *be* it himself, instead of waiting for it to come along inside somebody else. You think you've been getting sick of Sid, and his airs and graces. Well, you can be pretty sure that there hasn't been a day in the last twelve months when Sid wouldn't have given half he owns to see a hole in your heel or a hair on your collar or something spilled on the front of your blouse. Not that I like people to be untidy, or even careless, about how they look. Only there's such a thing as carrying a good thing too far. And when people get where they don't feel right without a tucked front or a split coat tail or a handbag with a tassel to it, they'd better take off their clothes and walk around naked for a while, and get acquainted with themselves. Sid's made a great impression on you now, lying around on the deck and getting all tanned up like an athlete. All the swimming he's done wouldn't brown him up much. He's just exactly the same as he ever was, and you needn't be so afraid of him. He's always been crazy. The only difference is that now he's crazy about something that won't hurt him. Unless, of course, he gets so fond of— Lucile, how long are you going to put up with this? Where's your spirit? I wouldn't *believe* you'd just lie down and let her walk off with him! Why don't you do something? Good Lord, he's no more in love with her than you were with Oliver, till Sid jumped into the water that day, like a fool, and tried to drown himself! Then you swung round fast enough. But in all the time we've been aboard this boat, what have you done to show you weren't in your drawing-room at home? Except the last day or so when you've acted as if you were in the kitchen! Nothing. You haven't even had the nerve to go rowing by yourself in the dinghy! How do you expect Sid to know you are aching to act real, if you

don't do something splendid and ridiculous and as unreal as possible to prove it to him? Can't you go up in an airplane? Or take the engine apart and put it together again? Can't you even swim?"

"Yes, I can swim," said Lucile, after a long pause. "But I hate salt water."

"Well," said Aunt Bill, with a sigh, "you may have to do more than one thing that you hate if you want to get your husband away from that uncorsseted sagebrush queen, my dear. You'll find——"

"I *hate* salt water!" Lucile said again, suddenly, and more vehemently. "I hate the taste of it and I hate it in my hair and I won't swim in it! All the little waves keep coming up and spanking me in the face and choking me and I won't swim in it! He can go to hell!"

Whereupon she burst into tears, rushed to the after cabin, and leaped into it, closing the hatches over her.

The next morning at about half past three I was awakened from uneasy slumber by something banging against the side of the boat.

"What's that?" I heard myself say aloud, as I sat up and stared before me. Then I noticed that Sidney's bunk was empty. We slept together in the forward cabin, the cap'n and Andy in the engine room. Aunt Bill and Lucile in the after cabin, and Phoebe Wheeler in the canvas hammock bed on deck, because she had insisted upon it from the beginning of the trip.

I leaped from my bunk and shot up the stairs in my pajamas, rushing to the stern of the boat where the hammock was, my bare feet slipping unpleasantly on the slimy deck.

"What is the matter?" Miss Wheeler asked, thrusting her head through an opening in the mosquito netting.

"I don't know," said I, and rushed back to the bow of the boat, remembering that after all the sound I had heard

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had seemed to be just above my head. By this time the cap'n and Andy were on deck, the cap'n peering out at the sky, and Andy rubbing his eyes sleepily. There seemed to be nothing the matter on the forward deck. The big anchor, which we seldom used, was lashed securely; the little anchor seemed to be holding well. But the boat was pitching badly, and it made me uneasy that I could not locate the cause of the disturbance. Finally, having assured myself that everything was made fast, and half convinced that I had been dreaming, I went below again. Sidney was awake and in his bunk. I had entirely forgotten to wonder where he was.

"Funny thing," I said, as I got into bed, "felt sure I heard something banging against the bow of the boat, but everything seems fast enough on deck. I must be crazy."

"No," said Sidney, "it was the big anchor. It had slipped over the side in an unusually violent toss, apparently, and was beating against the boat every time it rocked. It awakened me the first time it did it, I think; I went up and tied it."

The next morning we picked up from the floor a bottle of peroxide, quite unharmed, a box of talcum powder, which had left a zigzag trail behind it, and the alarm clock, with the glass broken. We dressed as quickly as we could for the pitching of the boat, which threw us from side to side, and went on deck, to an ugly gray sea, which seemed now nearly up to the level of the deck, and now, as if dropped out of sight, far below us.

We were as good there as anywhere in a blow, the cap'n told us, so we prepared to spend a dismal morning lying about on the decks, for no one wanted to be below, and quite without food or drink, if anybody had wanted anything, which they didn't, for no one could remain in the galley long enough to prepare anything. Lucile was pretty

white about the mouth, and she hadn't stayed in the cabin long enough to dress; she was in her dressing gown, with two blankets wrapped around her. Aunt Bill was lying conscientiously on her left side in a deck chair made as flat as it would go, sucking a lemon.

And in the midst of all this, Miss Phoebe Wheeler had to go in swimming.

She said the water wasn't so rough as the boat, which was perhaps true, and that she was used to things much tougher than that, having lived in a lighthouse until she was sixteen, and that, anyway, she wasn't going to sit around all day doing nothing. She'd just swim over to the float and back.

Well, we watched her for a while, and she seemed to be getting on all right; moreover, looking at the water made the boat rock twice as much, so presently we turned our attention to something else, consoling our consciences with the thought that she would yell if she needed anybody.

After listening to an unpleasant story which the cap'n told, about a windless hot day and an oily swell and a fishing trip, I wondered if Lucile were all right. She had gone back to her cabin some time before, and I knew it was a bad place for her to stay. I got up and started aft, grabbing at the rail now and then to keep from being thrown against the deck of the after house. Glancing out at the water, I saw that Miss Wheeler was safe on the float, sitting with her back to us, adjusting her bathing cap.

Then, as I looked, I became frozen with horror.

I have often seen that expression in stories, "frozen with horror," but never before had I realized just what it meant.

Moving slowly out toward the float, perhaps ten yards this side of it, now hidden by a wave and now visible again, was a little red cap not seen in the water before that summer, Lucile's.

I was, as I said, frozen with horror,

and for a moment I did nothing at all. Then suddenly I shouted.

"Miss Wheeler! Miss Wheeler! Phoebe! Phoebe! Phoebe!"

But the wind drove my voice back into my lungs.

The next moment I was in the dinghy, and somehow Sid was with me, and we were pulling out toward the float with both pairs of oars.

I looked over my shoulder.

Lucile was almost there.

I could see that she was exhausted.

It seemed impossible that the girl on the float should not hear her panting and gasping as I knew she must be doing. But the wind was wrong. "Wind against her, too," I thought, savagely, "poor little baby kid!" Something stuck in my throat, and I swallowed, pulling hard on the oars. Then I looked around again, just in time to see a hand reach up and touch the float, the float surge away from it, and the hand disappear. Sid gave a terrible shout; Phoebe Wheeler turned, leaped to her feet, and plunged into the water.

We did not see Lucile come up, though we were rowing with our heads over our shoulders, pulling desperately.

The next thing we saw was Miss Wheeler herself, clinging to the little ladder near the spring-board, holding in her arms a limp and unconscious figure. She had found Lucile caught under the float, and had got her just as she was going down the second time.

We were right alongside by now.

Sid got Lucile into the boat, while I balanced it—though I am stronger than he. I had seen that if I interfered with him, he would capsize us all. Then I helped Miss Wheeler in over the stern, pretty much exhausted.

On the way back I looked at Sid just once, then I turned my eyes away. He didn't know whether Lucile was alive or dead, and the look on his face was like nothing else that I ever saw before or since, terrible beyond the power of imagination.

Lucile did not die. She was very ill for several days, and not herself at all for several weeks. But after that she got her strength back entirely. And the first thing they did as soon as she was well enough was to strike out into the woods together, on a camping trip, bearing with them possibly the most expensive and elaborate camping outfit ever sent on ahead in an automobile, all the things you've ever seen advertised anywhere at all which are guaranteed to turn the woods into a combined kitchenette and boudoir.

As for Miss Phoebe Wheeler, she went back to her ranch.

She's a very fine girl, and I like her and admire her tremendously.

But I didn't marry her and I'm not going to.

I am still in love with Sidney Farquhar's wife.

SUNSET

THE gilded cloud that cruises
Along the western hills
Has traffic with the seraphs
In freight of daffodils;

And I can see the merchants
Of stuff from April's loom
Go staggering up the wharves of heaven
With bales of yellow bloom.

GRACE HAZARD CONKLING.



Madigan's Youth

By Louise Winter

Author of "In Greenwich Village,"
"Temperament," etc.



MADIGAN pulled his hat down until it rested on his thick, curly hair at its accustomed angle, for even if his heart were breaking over the possibility that confronted him, a nice regard for his personal appearance had become second nature to him after twenty years on the stage.

He took his stick and gloves from the man who had been with him since the days of his earliest successes, and with a careless "I'll be back early, Tim," he passed out of his dressing room, through the narrow corridor, and gained the street without meeting any of his associates.

It was the restless hour between matinée and evening performances. Madigan was in the habit of spending it at home, for he had established himself, after his marriage to Dolly Breen, in a comfortable apartment within walking distance of the theater. But this afternoon he bent his steps toward a taxicab hugging the pavement in search of a passenger, gave an uptown address, and got in. Once in the shelter of the cab, free from sympathetic eyes, Madigan relaxed.

What did Dolly's message portend? She was cutting both the afternoon and the evening performances, and she had given no excuse for her outrageous conduct. She had left the house in the morning, while Madigan had been taking his daily exercise at the gymnasium. She had told the maids that

she would not be home for lunch and that Mr. Madigan was not to wait for her, as she would go direct to the theater. She had done this once or twice of late, but never before had she failed to show up in time to go on in her part.

Madigan's friends had looked askance at his second matrimonial venture, but he had lost his head over Dolly Breen, just half his age, a newcomer to the boards, and apparently immensely flattered at being singled out for attention by the great and only Tom Madigan.

Madigan had only seen that her blue eyes were limpid, that her cheek had a soft down like the skin of a peach, that her little mouth was red and dewy, and her form one of yielding contours. He asked nothing more. She was youth personified, and the youth that he thought still clung to him like an aura desired her. She had come from an inland town, her first engagement had been as a villager in "Rory O'More's Return," and before the end of the season, Madigan had proposed, and she had accepted him.

It isn't always easy to play a new tune with limited notes, and there had been a few failures in the repertoire of Madigan's notable successes. The play he had offered in September, with Dolly in the opposite lead, had been one of these. It had struggled along for a month, and then Madigan, who had had no wish to go on tour, announced a

revival of "Rory," while the company rehearsed another play.

Madigan had recognized Dolly's contention that she could not descend from the position of a co-star to a cut above the chorus, and as she was not fitted for the leading rôle in "Rory," a dummy part was fashioned for her to save her pride. She was cast for the innkeeper's wife, but the songs that fell to that part in the original were allotted to the innkeeper's niece. It was an important rôle on the playbills, but not on the stage, and so, to-day, when she failed to put in an appearance, an understudy had easily been made up to take her part. The comedy had run to a successful finish without her—Madigan admitted that—but what worried him was the meaning of her prolonged absence.

Now he was taking his troubles to Flora Fraile. She had never failed him in the past, and he hoped that somehow she would divine his unspoken anxiety and soothe it.

Flora lived in the West Seventies, in an old-fashioned brick house that had withstood the march of time in the neighborhood. She was a widow, and she lived alone, for, as she told her friends, what was the use of confessing to forty if it brought you no privileges?

Madigan stepped out of the cab and glanced up at the windows, where the shades were evenly drawn. There was a light on the second floor, and it told of the presence of the mistress of the house in her own comfortable sanctum. He gave a sigh of relief and sprang up the steps with a boy's light tread. Mary, who admitted him, took his hat and stick and ushered him upstairs, for Mrs. Fraile had seen the cab drive up and Madigan alight.

She was standing in front of the fireplace, where a log of driftwood blazed. She was a tall woman, generously proportioned, with black eyes whose fire

was undimmed, and an unusual quantity of black hair which displayed one broad white lock over the left temple. She turned, as Madigan came in, and held out a shapely white hand.

"Well, Tom, you're a sight for sore eyes these days, for what with a young wife and a new play in rehearsal, your old friends see nothing of you unless they go to the theater." She had a pleasant voice, rich in timbre, and now there was a note of gentle raillery in it.

Madigan suddenly realized that it was months since he had seen Flora, for, in the flush of his new happiness, he had sedulously avoided the friends of his own age.

"I've been busy," he began, and then stopped. In the old days, he had never been too busy to drop in to see Flora.

"I know. There are times, Tom, when we have to make allowances, and if we can't do it, our friendship isn't worth much." She seated herself and motioned for him to draw up a chair near hers.

A tortured look crept into Madigan's gray eyes.

"Flora, I'm lying to you."

"I know it, Tom. Will you have tea and toast or something heartier? I've not forgotten that it's a *matinée* day." Her tone was cheerful.

"Tea and something on the toast."

She rang for Mary and gave her orders, and then she leaned forward and poked the fire, for it hurt like a knife thrust to see that look of misery on Madigan's face and to know that she dared not sympathize with him.

She kept to banalities until Mary arranged the tea table and brought in a plate of toast, cut thin, as Madigan liked it, and spread with *paté de foie gras*.

"Mrs. Madigan well?"

"Yes, thank you."

"And how's the new play going?"

"Fairish. Kerry's writing me some

new songs to interpolate, but he's pitching them in a lower key. No more tenor notes in my register now."

"I always liked your low notes best. They meant strength to me."

"They're meaning weakness to me, Flora." He sighed and then, as Mary withdrew for the last time, he leaned forward. "I'm thinking I've been a fool," he said bitterly, "an old fool!"

"Acknowledging it is the first step toward wisdom, Tom. You're not going to sit down in the gutter and cry about it, are you?" It was not necessary for him to put it into words. He had come to realize that his marriage was a mistake, but she had known it from the beginning.

There was no sympathy in her voice and it acted like a lash. Madigan, who had slumped in the depths of his armchair, straightened up involuntarily.

"No!" His reply came quickly. "But what am I going to do about it?" His appeal was almost childish. This woman had helped him so many times that it was instinct for him to turn to her now.

"Is it as bad as that?" she asked gently.

Madigan wrinkled his forehead.

"I'm not accusing her of anything that isn't natural, and if the 'Irish Troubadour' hadn't been a miserable failure, the theater might have made up to her for any lack in me. But now she's cutting matinées, and I don't even know where she is. I can't let this sort of thing go on, and yet how can I help myself?" He saw his plight and felt the grim humor of the situation. "If I put my foot down and she defies me, what'll I do then?"

"She's very young, Tom."

"Need you rub that in?"

"And very pretty."

"I'm afraid I fell for her pretty face."

"Well, you married her, and you've got to look out for her. I guess she didn't see much of life before she came

to New York, and it's gone to her head. We were greenies ourselves once. Do you remember, when I came here on my honeymoon, how you met me at the Waldorf and insisted upon my drinking a cocktail with you because we both came from Pleasantville? It was my first cocktail, Tom, and it made me sentimental, and we reminisced over the days you carried my books home from school. Perhaps it's just getting acclimated that's the trouble with your Dolly."

Madigan wondered if that could be the explanation. He called up a memory of Flora as she had been twenty years ago, her eyes agape at her first view of Peacock Alley, and her tongue loosen by her first Martini. Somehow he could not liken her, freshly arrived from Pleasantville, to Dolly. And yet he told himself fiercely that he had never been in love with Flora and he adored Dolly.

"When she first came here," Mrs. Fraile went on, "she had to work too hard to have time for discovering the pleasures of the town, but now that she's Mrs. Madigan and her future is provided for, she's going it a bit. Give her her head, and she'll probably settle down to a steady trot in time."

"By the time she's worried me into the grave?" Madigan returned impatiently.

Flora shook her head.

"You're making a mountain out of a molehill, I'm sure. See here, Tom, you've kept Mrs. Madigan pretty much to yourself. Now let your old friends have a chance to do something for her. Bring her here to dinner Sunday night, and I promise you not to ask only old fogies to meet her. I'll have a couple of boys in, too. Aggie Fraile's boy is in town, and we'll have the Dotys and their Walter and the Olivers and their John. It'll be a well-blended party, Tom, and we'll forget we're middle-aged in mingling with our young ones."

She saw Madigan wince slightly, and she knew that she had laid her finger on a sore spot.

Madigan clung piteously to his youth. He had a well-shaped leg, and knee breeches were becoming to him. The ruffled shirt hid his heavy jowls, and the tall buff hat that went with his favorite costume gave him a rakish appearance, so that, with a becoming wig, he never looked more than thirty on the stage. And his voice was musical. Even his speaking voice was a delight, with its carefully cultivated suspicion of a brogue—for Madigan had been born in York State as his father had been before him—and his flashes of Irish wit had a spontaneity that seemed to bubble up from a well of youthful enthusiasm.

But it was all artifice these days, and he knew it, though he hoped that as yet no one else suspected the effort it cost him to go warbling through three acts of pleasant comedy. And since his marriage to Dolly, he had tried more valiantly than ever to persuade himself that the passing years had taken none of his vigor from him.

To-day, however, his natural optimism forsook him, and a horrible fear that Dolly might have married him merely for the material advantages of the union would not be downed. He had come to Flora trusting that she would restore his waning confidence in his ability to hold a young girl, but for once Flora had dinned his age in his ears. Middle-aged, she called him, bracketing him frankly with herself, and though it was truth she spoke, it was not truth that he desired.

"Dolly should have known what she was doing!" Suddenly his wrath blazed out against the blue-eyed creature who tortured him.

"Perhaps she did know." Flora believed in swallowing your medicine, no matter how bitter it was. "Young folks nowadays are more calculating than

they were. And no one knew better than she the advantages to be gained from marrying you."

Flora put it boldly into words, and he, who had scarcely dared to whisper it to himself, stared at her resentfully.

"You think, then, there's nothing about me to love?" he demanded sullenly.

"A great deal, Tom, but I fear you haven't been showing her that side of you. You're not *Rory*, the prince turned vagabond and having all the colleens going mad over him. There were days when you might have swept Dolly off her feet by playing that rôle in earnest, but not now. To-day, you're a well-preserved, successful actor, but you're no youth, and you've no right to expect more than affection from the girl you've married."

For a long moment, Madigan hated the woman who dared to show him to himself as he was. He got up slowly.

"I didn't come here to have you tell me my duty, Flora Fraile," he began, the hot blood mounting in an angry red to his face.

Flora lifted her eyes to his, and a quiet amusement showed in their depths.

"No, Tom Madigan, you came here to have me tell you that you were still a Lothario, and that your Dolly ought to appreciate the prize she's drawn. But I can't. I see her side of it—the young thing wanting to flutter her wings a bit before she settles down to sober domesticity. Think of her as a wayward child and treat her as such."

"But she's my wife, not my daughter!"

"In point of years, she might be your daughter. Win her back by kindness, Tom. It's the only way. Since she won't come into your circle, try dipping into hers."

"I have tried, but there's no room for me there." He whispered his confession.

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"Then see if my plan won't work. I'll get up the dinner for Sunday night, and I promise you it'll be jolly enough to please her."

Madigan sighed.

"You're too good to me, Flora. And, after all, why should you be putting yourself out for us?"

Flora Fraile smiled faintly.

"Because I'm an old friend. Isn't that reason enough?" she demanded.

He admitted it grudgingly, and then he listened while she developed further plans to wean Dolly away from her present companions and to give her fresh interests in their set, where he, too, could mingle and be sure of his welcome.

The dinner on Sunday night was all Flora wished it to be.

At first Dolly pouted over the invitation.

"I don't want to go to a poky old dinner with a lot of poky old people!" she said petulantly.

Madigan controlled a desire to retort angrily. Instead, he said:

"Flora wants you to meet a nephew of her late husband's."

Dolly did not brighten, but the thought of a young fellow guest reconciled her slightly to the idea of the dinner.

When she was dressed, Madigan looked at her, and her fresh young beauty went to his head. He seized her roughly in his arms, careless of the fact that her frock was of a perishable material.

"Dolly ! Dolly ! You're mine, all mine, aren't you, sweetheart ? You do care for me, don't you ? Such love as I feel for you has got to win love in return, and when you plague me, it isn't indifference, is it ?"

He searched her face with hungry eyes, but Dolly remained unmoved under the passion that rang through his rich voice.

"Of course I care for you," she said, but her cool tones did not carry conviction. "But you needn't muss me all up loving me before dinner."

She pulled away from him and went over to the long mirror, where she rearranged the tulle shoulder straps which he had flattened by his embrace.

"Dolly, what does love mean to you?"

He folded his arms in a characteristic pose and surveyed her with a half smile on his mobile lips.

"I'm not good at guessing riddles. I suppose it means to me what it means to other women—protection, a home, and a husband."

"And no obligations on your part?"

Dolly was tired of being questioned.

"I always thought it would be more fun to be an old man's darling than a young man's slave, but I never wanted to be an old man's slave."

Madigan turned pale, and he did not recover his usual color until he had drunk his sherry and bitters in Flora Fraile's drawing-room.

The Madigans were the last to arrive, and Madigan noticed that Dolly lost her listless air the moment she entered the room and saw that at least three of the male guests were near her own age. From the other end of the table, he watched her sparkle as she turned from Tony Fraile to Walter Doty, and the knowledge that other men had the power to bring a smile to her lips raised his smoldering jealousy to a dangerous pitch. Flora talked to him, but he scarcely heard what she said. Bess Doty at his other side, also a Pleasantville girl, finally pulled at his sleeve.

"Wake up, Tom Madigan ! What's eating you ? Bored with our mature society, or bothered with your own affairs ? You shouldn't take your worries out to dinner." She chaffed him good-humoredly, for as a boy he had been devoted to her, although she was several years his senior.

"You're right, Bess, and I'll ask you to forgive me."

He made an effort to get himself under control and presently he succeeded. He even listened calmly while she expressed herself on the subject of unequal marriages.

"You always wanted the moon, Tom. I think you were fifteen when you proposed to me first and swore you'd kill yourself if I wouldn't promise to wait till you grew up. Suppose I had. The world would now be saying: 'Madigan can't be so young. Look at his white-haired wife.'"

Madigan displayed a flash of his old temper.

"And more than likely they're saying now: 'Madigan must be old! Look at the child he's married!'"

Bess Doty compressed her lips.

"She's pretty, Tom."

"She is that."

"Has she talent?"

"Of a sort."

"You're wise to keep her with you, though you don't need her salary to help you out. She's too young to be allowed to get lonesome."

"Not much fear of that!" Madigan spoke too quickly, and Bess Doty saw below the surface, but she had little sympathy for the man who persistently sought the wrong thing. His natural mate was Flora, but he had first married an actress whose professional jealousy had made his life a hell and, when death had set him free, had sought consolation in the arms of a brainless chit who was driving him mad with jealousy of another kind.

And Flora sat by, offering him a devotion which he selfishly accepted, never probing for the motives that prompted her royal gift.

After dinner, Madigan sang, but when he seated himself at the piano, Dolly signaled to her young escorts, and they stole out into the hall. They tried to hush their voices, but occasionally

Dolly's giggle penetrated to the drawing-room, and Flora's face grew grave. She feared the situation was too serious for her to handle. Dolly had a deceptive surface docility. Underneath was a selfish determination to have her own way that was as firm as a rock.

It was not long before Flora had a chance to test its hardness.

Madigan, rehearsing every day, playing at night, and worrying all the time, fell victim to the grip. He struggled against it for a couple of days, but at length was forced to give in. His physician ordered him to bed.

"But I've got to go on to-night!" Madigan had no understudy. His health was superb, and he had not missed a performance in years.

"Close the show for a week, Madigan. Otherwise it may close for all time. Pneumonia lies in wait for the reckless ones who won't take advice, and pneumonia with you would probably be fatal." He had known the actor for many years, and he spoke frankly as a friend as well as a physician.

Madigan, feeling strangely weak, submitted. He sent for his manager, ordered the theater closed, and then gave himself into the hands of the trained nurse who seemed to appear automatically.

"Is it contagious?" he asked anxiously, as she removed the thermometer from his mouth.

"Yes, but we'll take all precautions," she assured him.

"Keep Mrs. Madigan out of the room. No matter what she says, don't let her in! You must promise that, nurse!"

Miss Smith promised, but she thought she knew the futility of giving her word in such a point. It would be impossible to keep a wife out of her husband's sick room! But she did not know Dolly Madigan.

Dolly came in just before dinner.

She had been dancing at Rector's, and she had broken away from the crowd because, as she expressed it, Madigan had been grouchy of late. She pulled off her gloves and unfastened her furs as she waited for the maid to open the door, and then her intended question died on her lips as she caught sight of Anna's white face.

"It's Mr. Madigan, ma'am, and he's awful sick!" said the maid. "The doctor's been here, and now he's got a nurse. She told me to let her know when you came in."

Dolly reflected the other's terror.

"What is it?" she gasped out.

"I think it's the Spanish influenza, ma'am."

Dolly sat down weakly in the hall chair. She had a horror of illness and she had heard terrible stories of the way this new disease carried people off in a few days.

Miss Smith came presently. At sight of Dolly, in her tight-fitting satin frock, the fur cape drooping from her slender shoulders, the tiny velvet toque pulled down so that only one eyebrow was visible, and the young face blanched with fear, she felt a motherly impulse to take the girl in her arms and soothe her terror.

"Now, he's going to get along all right. He's got a fine constitution. So don't worry. He doesn't want you to come into his room, so we'll pretend to humor him to-night, but after he's asleep, you can take a peek at him."

Dolly grasped at the one straw of comfort in the whole affair.

"He doesn't want me?" she said quickly.

The nurse misunderstood.

"He was thinking of danger to you."

"Then perhaps I'd better do as he says." She got up, and the strained look faded from her face. "What about the show to-night?"

"It's called off. Mr. Madigan says he has no understudy."

"No, he's always afraid of giving another man a chance."

Her sarcastic tone made Miss Smith open her eyes. She foresaw that she would have no difficulty in keeping this wife out of the sick room. Perhaps the difficulty would be getting her there were she needed.

Dolly's room adjoined Madigan's, and she was glad to see that the door between was closed.

Miss Smith joined her at dinner, but their conversation was restrained. Miss Smith could discourse brilliantly on disease, but the young wife did not want to hear about illnesses. After dinner, Dolly went into the living room and yawned over the latest novel. She missed the excitement of the theater, and she was glad when the telephone began to ring and she was obliged to answer questions about Madigan. But this palled presently.

About ten o'clock she had a caller. Flora Fraile came up unannounced.

"How is he?" she demanded, and then the tension relaxed as she saw Dolly, clad in a rose-pink negligee, rise from the depths of an armchair to greet her. "I've known Tom Madigan for over forty years, and this is the first time he's been sick since he had the measles!"

"I guess there's nothing to worry about now. The nurse says he's doing all right, and the doctor isn't coming again until morning." Dolly's tone was one of infinite weariness. Her patience had become exhausted answering the numerous telephone calls.

Flora sat down uninvited and threw back her wrap.

"You have a nurse?"

"Oh, yes."

"Is he suffering? I've heard it's very painful."

"I don't think so. I didn't ask."

"Is he sleeping or could I see him a moment?"

"I'm afraid Miss Smith wouldn't let

you. They're even keeping me out of the room."

"Keeping you out! Do you mean to say you'd allow any one to keep you out of your husband's room when he's ill?" Flora leaned forward and fastened her fierce eyes on the young wife's flushed face.

"He doesn't want me," Dolly tried to defend herself.

"Aren't you big enough to realize that that's only another proof of his love for you?"

The young mouth settled in a mutinous line, and Flora came in contact then with the flinty quality that underlay the seemingly soft surface of Dolly Madigan's nature.

"In spite of what I feared, I tried to make out a case for you," Flora went on sternly. "I saw that you were young and I also saw that Tom had done you a wrong by mating his mature strength with your immature weakness, but I thought that no woman could live long with him and fail to love him for his big heart, his sunny temper, and his boyishness that no years can rob him of. But I made a mistake. You're not young in anything but actual years. You're hard, you're calculating, you're sophisticated! And Tom Madigan worshipping you and thinking only of you, though by this time he may be close to death! And you've nothing but your pretty face to work spells with—no real heart, no womanly tenderness—and yet you win out where we others fail!"

Dolly drew one fact out of all she had heard.

"So you're in love with him!" she said, with a little sneer.

"Yes, and I'm not ashamed of it! We can't call love into being nor can we banish it by wishing. It's there or it never comes at all, and we have little to say. Believing as I do, I can't blame you for not loving Tom. I can only wonder at it."

"Then please keep your wonder to yourself! I consider it a piece of impertinence for you to speak to me as you have done to-night!"

Flora Fraile rose and drew herself up to her magnificent height.

"You would," she said significantly. "And now I'm going in to see Tom, and for the sake of appearances, you'd better come with me."

Dolly scowled. She wanted to rebel, but Flora was stronger than she, and so she trailed along in the older woman's wake.

Madigan was in the grip of fever and did not know them. Flora stayed to talk to the nurse, but Dolly made her escape quickly. The atmosphere of the sick room was distasteful to her.

For five days Madigan fought fever and coma and delirium, and then one night the doctor announced that he was going to stay and see his patient through the crisis.

Dolly had remained dutifully at home for forty-eight hours, but after that she had allowed a persuasive voice over the telephone to coax her into a dinner at a near-by café, and from that time on, she came and went as if she owed nothing to the man who lay fighting for life in the room adjoining hers.

But she was doing some thinking. She was wondering what would happen if Madigan died and she were set free.

She *was* hard, she *was* calculating, but life had made her so. She had been born in a mill town. Her parents were poor and had a large family; she had never known the time when she hadn't suffered from the cold in winter and the heat in summer, and when she had had enough to eat. When she was fourteen, her parents had taken her out of school and put her in the mill, and then for the first time she learned the value of limpid blue eyes, golden curls, and a skin that even want could not rob of its bloom, and

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she had traded upon these things. They had given her an easy job with better pay than other girls of her age were getting. Life had begun to unfold for her. The mill owner's wife was a philanthropist. She visited her husband's mills and took an interest in his employees. One day she had heard Dolly singing softly at her work. The fair face framed with a halo of golden curls, the curved lips, the swelling throat, all had reminded the good woman of a painting of St. Cecilia.

After that Dolly had taken singing lessons from the village organist and had sung in the village choir.

The organist, an embittered man, had told her of cities where such beauty as hers would be recognized, but at that time Dolly had been having her first love affair. The mill owner had a nephew whom he had put into the mill so that the young man might have a chance to work his way up. George Lansing had brains, but he was weak, and he had counted upon his relationship to the mill owner to insure him an easy berth. But in this he had miscalculated. He had been reprimanded several times and then told that his next escapade would cost him his position. He had promised reform, but the first temptation that had come his way had made him break his word. His uncle, however, had kept his.

Lansing had clung to Dolly as a weak man frequently clings to some woman. He had wanted her to elope with him. But she was eighteen and shrewd. She had told him to go away and make good; then she would follow him. She had waited a year, and then, not hearing from him, she had gone to New York on her own account to look for a stage position, backed by a letter from the organist to a prominent manager.

Her voice was sweet and flexible, but of no great power. Her pretty face and youthful charm, however, had worked their own way with the men

with whom she had come in contact. How well it had worked was proven when Tom Madigan, star of the company, had fallen in love with her and proposed marriage.

Dolly had never hesitated. She didn't love him, but she had a poor opinion of love after her experience with George Lansing, and Madigan had accumulated a fortune during his long stage career. Of late, however, the actor's demands had begun to irritate her, and just at the time when he had been most exacting she had met Lansing at a cabaret. He had not prospered, and he blamed his failure upon her. It flatters a certain type of woman to think that a man has gone to perdition on her account, and Dolly was more interested in the broken-down sport than she had been in the youth who had stooped to her at home.

On the night of the crisis in Madigan's illness, she came in from a stormy interview with Lansing to find Flora Fraile awaiting the doctor's verdict, and then it came to her what it would mean if Madigan died and cut the Gordian knot of her tangled duties.

But Madigan did not die.

Toward morning the doctor came into the room and addressed Flora, whom he had known for a long time, not Dolly.

"It's past, Mrs. Fraile! He's going to get well! All he needs now is nursing and cheering up." Then he perceived Dolly, who interposed her slight figure between him and the other woman. "I beg pardon, I didn't see you at first, Mrs. Madigan. I'm going now, but I'll look in about eleven, as usual." He bowed stiffly to the creature, as he expressed it, that Tom Madigan had married, and gave a confident smile to the woman his old friend should have selected. Then he went out with one more victory over death to his credit.

Madigan's convalescence was a

speedy one. In less than a week, he was sitting up, but the physician advised a month of rest before a return to the stage. Madigan consented. He was curiously tractable in these early days of finding himself again.

His attitude toward his old friends was unchanged, but his attitude toward his wife had undergone a subtle transformation that puzzled onlookers. He never asked for her, and when she came into his room, he never questioned her absences. He made no advances, and he accepted her rare caresses quietly.

There was a day of reckoning coming. They both felt it, and they waited.

It came the day after there had been a disaster at sea, when a ship had gone down, and curiously enough most of those who had perished had been young men.

Madigan, dressed in a last winter's suit that hung on his gaunt frame, was sitting in a Morris chair in the living room, and Flora was with him. She stopped in most afternoons at this hour. They had been discussing the tragedy, and suddenly Madigan cried:

"If only we who have done with the best of life could be taken and leave the fullness of noon to the young!"

Flora covered his thin hand with hers.

"The fullness of noon is yours today, Tom," she told him generously.

He shook his head.

"It's the twilight staring me in the face, Flora."

She did not know how to comfort him in these new, dark moods, but she pressed the fingers still clinging to hers and waited for a clew to the depression which seemed to envelop him.

And while they sat in silent communion, Dolly came into the room. She saw the clasped hands which, under her ironic gaze, parted company guiltily, and a little smile widened her lips.

"I'm glad Mrs. Fraile is here, as she

mostly is nowadays, for I want her to hear what I have to say to you, Tom."

She drew up a chair facing the other two, and they intuitively felt that something momentous was about to occur.

"I want to go back a long time and tell you what she doesn't know and you know only in part." And then she sketched briefly the sordid phases of her childhood, bringing the recital up to the time when she had been engaged for a part in "Rory O'More's Return."

"I never expected to see George Lansing again, and I liked you well enough, Tom, but I liked best what you stood for in my eyes. Mrs. Fraile has called me calculating, and I can't deny that I weighed to the full what it would mean for me if I married you. As for love, I'd had enough of that, and I was used to having people pet me. When I was little, they pulled my curls and pinched my cheeks and kissed me when they dared to. And I didn't mind, because the kiss was usually followed by a piece of candy or money. When I went to take my singing lessons, Mr. Raleigh used to kiss me. At first I hated it, but after a time I didn't mind. So I thought in time I wouldn't mind your kisses either, Tom. And I didn't—so much—until I met George Lansing again.

"He's always cared for me, but his love isn't like yours. You're always giving me things, and he needs what I can give him. He isn't strong and big, like you. He depends on me. He was pretty nearly down and out when I met him—a little over a month ago—but he pulled himself together because I asked him to. And then he got this chance to go to Brazil, and he wanted me to go with him, but I couldn't do that—not while you were so sick. But I told him for the second time that if he'd go and make good, I'd ask you to free me and let me go to him." She paused a moment.

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loved him in the right way—and it must be the right way, for it's made me willing to give up the things I always thought counted and to choose poverty with him. I didn't realize it until this morning when I read of the accident on board the *Almendares*. He was on board the *Almendares*, and I thought I'd die if I read his name among those who had been lost. I went down to the steamship office, and there I learned that he was safe. I've just come from there, and he's on his way back to New York to make another start. When he goes again, I want to go with him, even if he has to wait over another steamer. Can't it be done?"

Several times Madigan had wished to break into his wife's strange recital, but some unknown force had urged him to hear her out. He had listened to the brief history of her early love affair, and had heard her confess the material motives which had prompted her to marry him, and he had felt only pity for the starved youth in her breast. He had heard her proclaim her love for George Lansing, and his dominant feeling had been one of compassion for two young hearts against a man-made wall. What had happened to his own mad love? Had it filtered out through his depleted system with the passing of his fevered dreams? Why did he sympathize with her instead of hating her for her long deception?

He studied her face. There was a hint of depth there which he had not seen before.

"You want a divorce?" he asked.

"Yes. I'd like to go to him—clean." Her little features were twisted with

pain and the fact that she was suffering seemed in a way to wipe out the wrong she had done him.

And then it came to him that the wrong was not all on her side. He owed her reparation for having tempted her beyond her strength. She had fallen a victim to his lust for conquest, to his unspeakable vanity, to his delusion that there was enough youth left in him to mate with her adorable freshness.

"You shall, and we'll arrange it as quickly as possible," he said.

Dolly got up and crossed to his chair. She bent her head and dropped a light kiss on his thick gray curls.

"Thank you both—for understanding," she said, and with a grateful glance that embraced Flora as well, she turned and left the room.

Madigan stared after her, a curious look of relief dawning in his eyes.

"There goes the youth of Tom Madigan, Flora," he said slowly, a humorous smile curving his full lips. "But what is the passing of youth when one gains the mastery of his own soul?" It was the last flare of his supreme vanity.

"And have you mastered yours?"

"I've swept it clear of dreams and delusions, and from now on I'll fill it with facts. And the first fact I'll install is my continued need of your friendship. You'll never let that fail me, will you, Flora?" His tone was earnest and eager.

"No," she promised him, for it did not matter to her what he called the exquisite relationship that existed between them.



Exiled

By Edna St. Vincent Millay

SEARCHING my heart for its true sorrow,

This is the thing I find to be:

That I am weary of words and people,

Sick of the city, wanting the sea;

Wanting the sticky, salty sweetness

Of the strong wind and shattered spray,

Wanting the loud sound and the soft sound

Of the big surf that breaks all day.

Always before about my dooryard,

Marking the reach of the winter sea,

Rooted in sand and dragging driftwood,

Straggled the purple wild sweet pea.

Always I climbed the wave at morning,

Shook the sand from my shoes at night,

That now am caught beneath big buildings,

Stricken with noise, confused with light.

If I could hear the green piles groaning

Under the windy, wooden piers,

See once again the bobbing barrels,

And the black sticks that fence the weirs;

If I could see the weedy mussels

Crusting the wrecked and rotting hulls,

Hear once again the hungry crying

Overhead, of the wheeling gulls;

Feel once again the shanty straining

Under the turning of the tide,

Fear once again the rising freshet,

Dread the bell in the fog outside,

I should be happy!—that was happy

All day long on the coast of Maine.

I have a need to hold and handle

Shells and anchors and ships again.

I should be happy, that am happy

Never at all since I came here.

I am too long away from water.

I have a need of water near.



The Heart of a Mood

By Vennette Herron

Author of "The Joyous Dreamer," etc.

LIKE the flashings of a cinema drama were the memories that came to Jeanne, overlapping one another in frantic haste to portray the panorama of her life.

First, she was walking through a field with Little Brother—a very large field filled with waist-high grass, which rippled and waved before her cleaving, like a green-and-silver sea. Overhead, a storm rumbled nearer and nearer, coming, not in a sullen, dark-gray sheet, as sometimes, but in tossing, billowing wind clouds, black and silver, with streamers of filmy white—clouds that scurried along, tumbling over one another as they came. And, oh, the exhilaration of that cool wind, blowing across the grass at the close of a summer day!

Behind them was home. In front of them, upon one of the far corners of the field, stood the village church with its wooden spire, and upon the other a white house walled in with lilac bushes, drooping their heavy fragrance above a picket fence. A castle of romance was this last, for there dwelt a beautiful lady who sat all day in a wheeled chair, painting fragile china cups and marvelous Easter eggs.

Little Brother was so very little that he toddled still. He wore a dark-blue, striped dress and chewed ecstatically upon a piece of white gum, the kind one bought for a penny—heart-shaped and backed by a colored picture of a curly, gold-haired girl. Jeanne had been warned to take good care of Little Brother, so she held his tiny hand in hers and tried to walk sedately, while her spirit sailed with the wind and her heart grew big with glee. Like a fairy

in the night, she piped a glad song, which had never been sung before, and, in eager attempt to share her exaltation, cried:

"Sing, Little Brother, sing!"

Then, suddenly, Jeanne became older. She was six years now, at least. The field remained the same, but morning had transformed it from sea green to gold. Yellow butterflies flitted here and there, and, as she knelt, Jeanne saw the shining daylight gleam through the sharpened spears of saffron grass, and her nostrils tingled with the scent of sun-baked earth and the really, truly summer smell of daisies and dandelions.

They were doing a dreadful thing, were Jeanne and Little Brother. They were worshipping idols! The tales that she had heard in Sunday school of the wrath that wrecked the heathen had aroused Jeanne's curiosity, and, as the most fearful experience her mind could conceive, she had determined to put the thing to the test. It goes without saying that where Jeanne led, Little Brother followed.

They were not entirely certain how to proceed, but they gathered sticks and stones and made a little mound, which they decorated with flowers and pungent weeds. Then, with grim determination, they laid their sacrifices—a stick of peppermint candy and a pancake filched from the nursery breakfast table—before it. Finally, with many cautious looks around and with much inward quaking—for what terrible punishment might not be theirs?—they knelt before the mound. Nothing happened—and thus early was the heart of Jeanne released from fear. If this

brought no vengeance from external forces, nothing would! Kneeling so, with the hot sun pouring over her and the hot earth steaming up to her, Jeanne thrilled until her little body rocked with an ecstasy of pagan joy. It was a wonderful adventure!

In quick succession, next, came half-formed, ever-shifting, nebulous memories of uneventful, happy days, during which Jeanne felt herself to be the beginning and end of thought and emotion—days passed in a cozy, intimate world, consisting of the field, the houses in sight, and short walks, all radiating from home, like rays from the sun; a world inhabited by dear, familiar figures—Father, Mother, Little Brother, Nurse, Cook, The Easter-egg Lady, and the Old Man Next Door, who kept bees and who had once, most fascinatingly, fallen from a ladder while attempting to gather in a swarm.

In an instant, these days were gone, leaving Jeanne nine years old and in the throes of a tremendous discovery. She had been sent away to school—to the convent where Mother had been educated—and she was learning that there were other worlds besides her own—not Europe, Asia, and Africa, but other little girls, each with a world of father and mother and home and pleasures revolving around herself. Jeanne was no longer alone, but a single star in a sky full of constellations. It was appalling, for just a bit, and then appealing, as opportunity for experience proved always to be, to Jeanne.

There followed exploration after exploration into this planet and then into that. Deliciously exciting and yet strangely similar were the days that now passed in review, like soldiers on parade. One of them, however, stood out clearly against the background of the others, for upon that day her first sorrow had come to Jeanne, and she relived the sweet pain of it now. Father and Mother were going far away, to

France, upon a great ship, and Jeanne and Little Brother were to spend the summer with Aunt Mary. It was novel and sad to be left behind like that, and to know that she could not see Father and Mother for so long a time. And how thrilling it was—how almost mature—to feel sad! Jeanne wept copiously and was utterly thankful for the occasion to do so. Grief came to her as a new and peculiarly poignant form of pleasure, and she wondered why grown-ups seemed to dread it so. It was like eating olives and pickled limes instead of candy—that was all; and Jeanne adored variety.

By this time Jeanne had a dearest friend. They were each about twelve years old; dolls and toys no longer interested them. Their pastime was to pretend that they were sixteen—at which age they were certain one began actually to live—and that they had lovers. They sought secluded alcoves and there spent hours whispering and giggling together, while they vied in plotting amorous intrigues and planning boudoir settings, in which each saw herself framed as an irresistible heroine. To become a grown-up, to finish with school, to be out in the world and mistress of her own behavior—these things summed the goal of existence in Jeanne's mind now. Yet was she neither impatient nor unhappy; on the contrary, she felt herself to be a voluntary novice, preparing for a glorious future, and she thrilled at each step she took.

Came then a unique night. Tiptoeing—barefooted and breathless—through the dim-lit corridors of the old convent, on the way to a late, forbidden feast, there sprang suddenly into Jeanne's consciousness the realization that life had ceased to be all pretense and gesture; that she genuinely was a heroine; that she was actually doing things which she had read about other girls doing and which she had imag-

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ined herself to be doing; that she was living a story and that it lay with her to make the context mirthful or tragic, beautiful or sordid, as she would.

What a thought! Jeanne stopped still—a slender, budding figure, shivering a little, in a short, ruffled nightgown—and laughed aloud. A door flew open, disclosing Sister Veronica, with a lighted candle in her hand, and resulting in an unusually *mauvais quart d'heure* for Jeanne. But she bore it lightly, nursing her gladness over the great revelation.

Never again did she peer wistfully out at the world, but gazed joyously in at herself, forever laughing with the exultation of a creator, as she watched her own development and expansion. With complete and fearless abandon, she hurled herself into adventure, deliberately writing page after page in the fervent book of her life—forever experimenting with it, comparing it with others, retouching it, shading it, confident always of its ultimate triumph. Like an epicure before a loaded table, Jeanne faced her fate.

Now came picture after picture—staccato snapshots of girlhood, of study and friends, of whispered confidences, of honors hardly won and proudly worn, of madcap pranks, of the dramatic, delightful melancholy of graduation, with its attendant festivities. And then, in a flood of rosy radiance, the lovely scene of her real entrance into life spread over the screen of Jeanne's mind.

She had returned from school—not to the old house in the village, but to a splendid new home in the city. She had had a presentation tea, and to-night she was going to her first ball. It was her eighteenth birthday, and at last she was a grown-up—not exactly on a par with Father and Mother, but still a distinct individual, with her own right to recognition and opinions. She stood in the center of the drawing-room and

revolved slowly before an admiring audience composed of Father, Mother, Little Brother—now a big boy and at home for the holidays—and all of the servants. She wore a frock of white chiffon and silver, and her arms cradled sheafed red roses. Quivering and rapturous, she followed Mother out to the carriage.

Nor did the pictures that followed contain aught of disappointment or disillusion. The ball was a glittering, sparkling thing, dripping happiness as a ripe fruit drips juices—a picture of roses and wine and jewels, of chandeliers, bright eyes, and white-toothed smiles; a series of crystal flashes, so brilliant that they extinguished details and faces.

Jeanne laughed and laughed, and the world echoed and loved her silver laughter and wove of it a gossamer with which to clothe the memories of all this happy period—memories of pretty maids and stalwart youths, of picnics and parties, of lovers and first kisses, of confessions and moonlight; memories of youth, with its unquestioning acceptance.

Occasionally a wisp of evil intruded, floating up to the surface of the glamour, only, in the next instant, to be sucked back to the depths. There was the wistfulness in the eyes of middle-aged women; there was the envy in the eyes of ugly ones, and the terror—or, worse yet, the resignation—in the eyes of those who had grown old. These were things about which Jeanne wondered; it was these that sometimes brought a shudder to her shoulders; it was these that spread the marsh mire through which grew the lilies of laughter. Jeanne felt it all—the pathos of the background—loved it all, and rejoiced at seeing herself a lily.

And now came the memory, most precious of all, most poignant, most cherished—the memory that makes life sad for women, setting a standard for

sensation that can never be recalled. Jeanne had had suitors in abundance, had even been engaged, or "almost engaged," several times. She had thrilled sentimentally over notes and flowers, and one man after another had caught her fancy. Ardently expectant, she had scanned each new male acquaintance and held herself open for the something that she knew must come. And life surprised, but did not fail her.

It was summer in the country. Jeanne was lying in a hammock under the trees—a petaled mass of rose or-gandy in a mesh of woven brown, like a flower in a basket. She was waiting for Dick—Dick, who had spent his summers at his uncle's country place, adjoining her father's, for the past ten years, and who had always taken up her unoccupied hours; Dick, whom she had flaunted and flouted, teased and cajoled, cast aside and recalled, just as expediency and inclination dictated, throughout all of her girlhood; Dick, who was just enough older and enough more serious to be sometimes impatient of her forever bubbling springtime laughter; Dick, who had not had the good fortune to discover early that fear was an anachronism and life a game to be played, instead of a duty to be performed.

His step came, muffled by the dewy grass. And suddenly, without warning, the night was flooded with light; perfumes filled Jeanne's nostrils; music sounded sweet and faint in her ears. She stretched her arms voluptuously above her head and, laughing softly, like a drowsy, chirping bird in its nest, she rose and ran on tiptoe to meet the great adventure, knowing that, at last and without reason, she loved. There was no hesitation for Jeanne, but panting, eager haste, a rush into life; and her exultation came not from the thrill of being loved, but out of the marvel of loving.

Jeanne saw herself now as a bride,

radiant and unafraid, clad in white satin and orange blossoms and standing between tall, flickering candles and banks of palms—a slim, shining moth of a girl, holding a decorous face, while her heart leaped and capered with delight and her consciousness glowed with the thought that she was actually playing her part in one of the great mysteries of living. Jeanne moved so much in her dreams, was so completely the rapt spectator of her own unfolding, that it was only at a few high moments that there came the realization of herself as an actor as well as a producer, and such moments were always superlative adventures in a world so packed with interest that one must scurry through it breathlessly, reaching after everything, fearing only the too speedy passing of opportunities. When one grasps at infinity, one is bound, at the best, to lose so much.

This constituted Jeanne's one dread—that the end might come so long before satiety. This thought was a nightmare that crouched, sometimes, on her chest in the dark, and crushed her into trembling wakefulness. That the great world, with all of its beauties, might not be seen entire; that the sum of her experience might not, could not, be complete—this was terrible. For this reason, Jeanne feared death. For this reason, the thought of death was to her a torment and a menace. For the rest, all was joy.

When loved ones died, Jeanne wept, while her heart sang, "Now I am knowing loss!" When she knew poverty—as at one time she did—she hugged her hunger pangs and fitted a climax of starvation into her own romance. When she attained a measure of wealth and fame—as at one time she did—she strutted a little, not because of her possessions, but because of her pride in making of herself a possessor. She knew neither stagnation nor ennui; the writing of an inspired book does not

bore its author. When she was asked, as she often was, why she went laughing through life, when hers was, after all, no more than an ordinary existence, "But it is life!" replied Jeanne, and laughed the harder at their perplexity.

She perplexed her husband, too, in spite of their mutual adoration.

Last of all, after reels and reels of colorful, colorless, shifting scenes, came the memory of a talk with him—with the big, patient, plodding, prospering creature whom Jeanne had married, so different from herself, who yet held her heart in the hollow of his hand.

"Jeanne," he complained, "nothing in the world seems serious to you—or even quite real, quite personal. It hurts me, sometimes. Even your love is not—sacred, but flippant, fairylike, not quite human."

"No, no!" protested Jeanne. "Joy is human. It's only because more than half of the world has become perverted that it seems abnormal. I am a sculptor, modeling my masterpiece; why shouldn't I sing at my work, no matter what tools I must use? To live is joy; to die, alone, is terrible. If you could understand as I do, you would be spared all suffering—you, too, could laugh with pleasure at all of life's offerings."

"But some of her offerings seem to me more to be dreaded than the end of life seems to you. When you can laugh at death, I will believe," he said. "Then I will accept your words as absolute."

"To release one victim from the thralldom of fear to the freedom of laughter—that would be an achievement worth while, and, if I could do that for you, a lover's triumph." With a laugh that was half a pur, Jeanne drew him down into her arms.

And now it was over; the picture was done. Jeanne's laughter was

stilled, smothered in horror. She had been so happy that morning, sailing over blue, tropical waters in a great yacht, good friends around her, her husband beside her. In a merry, chatting row, they had leaned across the rail to watch the flying fish. Then, suddenly, unexpectedly, the huge boom had swung over, the boat had lurched sickeningly, Jeanne had been too slow in the scramble—It was difficult, now, to comprehend how it could have happened, but there she was—in the water. Several moments had passed since her fall. The guests on the yacht stood in a huddled, frightened group; already a small boat, rowed by her husband and several frantic sailors, was plowing toward her.

She had gone a bit too far in her flirtation with her best friend's husband last night. They had had heavenly fresh strawberries for breakfast. All of this and more Jeanne remembered, as she struggled in the blue water, dazzling above a black hell, like a sapphire in the stopper of a poison bottle. Terror clamped her heart. Her strength was almost gone. The knowledge grew that the boat could never reach her. She shrieked and gurgled hideously—sinking down, down, inevitably, into nothingness.

Gasping again on the surface, she saw her husband's face, distorted with agony, straining toward her. Came again the memory and the echo of his words: "When you can laugh at death, I will believe." To pass on her doctrine of laughter would be to approach immortality; to pass it on to her beloved would be a triumph of love's giving. As in the old days, she saw herself gallantly playing out the finish. She tried and, for the first time, faced defeat. It was too hideous, too irrevocable—this ending.

Magnificently then came the final revelation: "Thus only can experience be made complete." To balk, if possi-

ble, would be to miss the supreme adventure. Adventure is always good; laughter still reigns!

How to let him know! She must let him know! Struggling—struggling—in a last heart-breaking effort, she bored her way upward through the engulfing waters. The boat was nearer

—much nearer—but not near enough to save her.

"Boy," she called, in a voice that rang clear and true, "I love you! I am laughing!"

And, laughing still, Jeanne sank below the sparkling, sun-warmed waves, which closed forever over her.



THE MASQUE OF DREAM

To Ruth Chatterton.

I.

HEAR I the fragile music of the fay?

What ancient magic holds me? Now at last
I seem to find the wonder of the past,

Known before time had touched the world to gray.

Some vanished star has found me with its ray,

That once in seas of old romance was glassed;

A shadow of enchantment softly cast

By some lost moon is on my heart to-day.

Yours is the charm that perished long ago,

Or so we thought. Now listening, I know

Forgotten spells are on the air to-night,

And dreams that haunt me in an irised band.

Your captive unconditional I stand,

Wounded deliciously by sound and sight.

II.

No more of Helen's beauty, nor the band

Of Circe waving would my visions be,

For western sunsets long have saddened me,

Watched as the surf was on the twilight strand,

Till now my dream is of a nameless land—

A realm of rains and grass beside the sea,

Where roams a blue-eyed princess, dryad-free,

On paths between the forest and the sand.

Again my dream has change, till sea and wind

Seem far away, and in a garden close

Translucent flowers touch the calm with musk,

On yellow marbles delicately twined,

Where, silent as her heavy-petaled rose,

A golden queen sits in a golden dusk.

GEORGE STERLING.

Ainslee's Book of the Month

MARE NOSTRUM, by Vicente Blasco Ibañez;
E. P. Dutton & Co., New York.

THE vogue of Blasco Ibañez, as translated into English by Charlotte Brewster Jordan, has been one of the events of recent book publishing. Last year, the "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse" swept the United States. Followed a hurried succession of the author's pre-war books, of which the most notable was "Blood and Sand," a story of the bull ring. Now we are offered the very latest of the Spaniard's works, a sort of companion novel to the "Four Horsemen," in that it deals with the maritime phase of the world struggle.

"Mare Nostrum" is an epic conception, admirably handled. The title refers to the Mediterranean, which has been "our sea" to the Latin race since the days of the Roman republic. The hero, Ulysses Ferragut, is from the Valencian coast, but he is equally at home in Barcelona, Marseilles, Naples, even the ports of the Levant and the Black Sea. We are made to feel that to be a Mediterranean sailor is to enjoy an ancient citizenship superior to the narrow nationalism of to-day.

Ulysses was brought up by land-loving parents and other relatives who hoped to make a notary of him. But he early fell under the influence of an uncle nicknamed the "Triton." The latter is one of the most vivid characters in the book. He is the very spirit of the inland ocean, an amphibious creature sporting in the foam and thrilling timid fisher girls as he swims in shore, his beard blown over his shoulder like that of Poseidon. The portrait stands out in high relief.

The early part of the hero's seafaring career is spent on tramp steamers. Then he becomes an officer in the transatlantic passenger service, rising to be a captain. He is persuaded to try landlubber idleness as a capitalist in Barcelona, but he cannot endure the monotony and returns to the sea as master of his own vessel. From this point the action moves rapidly. The breaking out of war makes his fortune. His boat, being under a neutral flag, is in great demand and freight rates mount.

In Naples, where an accident maroons him for a month, he meets Freya. His infatuation for her, with its crucial scene in the Aquarium, is superbly depicted. Freya is a German agent. She twists the simple-hearted Ulysses about her finger, setting a price upon herself which he pays without at first realizing its significance. He becomes a purveyor of oil to Teuton submarines. A brief period of success is followed by Nemesis as inevitable as in Greek tragedy. His son perishes on a torpedoed vessel. His own fate and that of Freya are remorselessly portrayed, but are invested with a certain dignity that raises this novel far above the machine-made war fiction of the past few years.

It is the fashion among the literati, particularly those of his own race, to hold Blasco Ibañez lightly. They assert that he is a propagandist, not an artist. "La Bodega" and "Blood and Sand" fairly invited such criticism. Even the "Four Horsemen" sermonized overmuch. But "Mare Nostrum" is greater than any moral it may contain. It compels us to take its author seriously.

W. A. R.



In Broadway Playhouses

By Edwin Carty Ranck

Should Theater Audiences Strike?

THERE is one striking similarity between theater audiences and the actors who entertain them: They both want what they want when they want it. The actors have a curiously human craving to be paid for their work, and audiences have the same sort of craving to be entertained. But while the Actors' Equity Association has rightfully undertaken to see to it that the actor is worthy of his hire, the poor audiences must pay for their cake even when they can't eat it.

If the members of the Actors' Equity Association have the right to call a strike and make the Gay White Way look like a wilderness trail in darkest Africa, why can't theater audiences also go on a strike? Should men and women be forever forced to accept an arbitrary schedule of two and a half hours of *alleged* amusement for which they have paid an exorbitant price, merely because it is unprecedented to demand two and a half hours of *actual* entertainment?

During that blithesome period of Roman history when men went into arenas looking like animated gas heaters, and fought each other all over the place, the audiences had the right to say whether the vanquished warrior was to live or die. It all depended on

the audience getting its money's worth. The method was extremely simple. If they felt that the victim was an armored failure who had bored them by a poor exhibition of skill, they turned their thumbs down. This was the kibosh sign for the "animated gas heater." "Thumbs down" was the Roman equivalent for our expressive "*good night!*"

On the other hand, if the boiler-plated victim was a game fighter and ran the other man all around the ring and across the middle, before being licked, the Roman audiences were always good-natured to a degree. They would smile benevolently and turn their thumbs skyward, and the victim would brush off his armor, set his helmet straight, and go clanking merrily on his way. In other words, there had to be plenty of Roman punch in those old-time spectacles of blood and iron, otherwise the audiences would become peevish and show it rather plainly.

Now I am in favor of reviving this pleasant old Roman custom of turning down the thumbs when a play smells of mortality and bad play-writing. Each audience should be a sort of union, as it were, with the power to close automatically every play or musical show that belonged in Oshkosh but was trying to stay on Broadway. Such

a sympathetic strike on the part of the audience would be a good thing for all concerned. It would notify the manager in definite fashion just what the public thought of his offering, and it would save the long-suffering dramatic critic from the trouble of making up his mind about the attraction. The public would make up his mind for him and no critic could afford to change it.

Recently, I went to see an old-fashioned white slave play that might have been written by some demented Daisy Ashford. All around me were men and women making amusing remarks about this paranoiac drama. Some of them thought it was the funniest serious play they had ever seen, and others thought it was the most serious funny play they had ever seen. They were making these comments with the frank cynicism of a sophisticated New York audience, but they stayed in their seats, because old Michael J. Precedent was still on the job. So they endured two and a half hours of torture for which they had paid three dollars and thirty cents apiece. Just think of it!

I want to go on record as advocating a new theatrical organization that will be entirely for the benefit of the long-suffering playgoers, and I suggest that it be called the Anti-Boredom Playgoers' Association and shall be made up of those theatergoers who have been goaded into madness by the t. b. m. sort of stuff on which they have been fed up for the past ten years.

This organization should be made up of men and women who have the courage of their convictions; men and women who are willing to strike in the middle of a performance and walk out; men and women who will demand a closed theater unless plays of union merit are produced.

When you come right down to facts, it is not the actors' fault that so many bad plays are produced annually in New York. The actors do the best

they can with the material provided for them. Ethel Barrymore stated, during the recent actors' strike, that she had wanted to play Shakespearean parts for years, but that the managers would not permit it.

Should theater audiences strike? What do you think, Mr. Playgoer, and you, Mrs. Playgoer? Do you not think that the time has come for all good men and women to come to the aid of the drama? Don't you think they should amalgamate with the protestors against punk plays and form such an organization as I have suggested? Do you not think that you owe a sacred duty to society and to the public at large to declare in favor of the *closed theater* rather than sit through performances of paranoiac plays?

Come now, I appeal to you to join the Anti-Boredom Playgoers' Association. If it is once started, it will grow like a snowball traveling down a hillside, and in time the membership will become so formidable that the managers will not dare ignore its existence. Every playgoer would be a prospective member, and it would make the Drama League of America look as lonesome as a prohibitionist at a brewers' picnic.

The motto of the organization should be: "Thumbs Down for Bad Plays." When a man in the audience raised his hands in the air and rested his two thumbs upon his head, that would prove to the other members of the association that he belonged. Then there would be thumbs down all over the theater. When this much had been accomplished, some member with assurance and poise could step into the aisle and say in distinct tones:

"Fellow members of the Anti-Boredom Playgoers' Association, I hereby declare a strike against this performance, which is unworthy of either serious or humorous consideration. Those in favor of a walkout will follow me."

It would be a riot! The man who had the courage to address these words to the audience would instantly become a rival of the *Pied Piper of Hamelin*. Men and women would follow him as the rats followed the piper. Whether they should demand their money back at the box office is a question that would have to be thrashed out when the association was organized. But I am sure that many of the members would be so glad to get out of that theater that they would not care to waste time collecting at the box office.

Will this be the next move in the theatrical situation in New York? Who knows? Even old Michael J. Precedent himself would not be really amazed at such action on the part of the present-day theatergoers. Michael J. has been hit so hard and so many times in his solar plexus recently that there is not a grunt of surprise left in his system.

Thank God, say I, for Booth Tarkington and Harry Leon Wilson! They may not be able to write plays that contain bedrooms, revolvers, "cut-ins," "close-ups," and all the rest of the hack playwright's equipment, but they can draw real characters and write delightful comedy. The most enjoyable play I have seen this season is "Up From Nowhere" by these two versatile authors. It is a play of chuckles and smiles and an occasional guffaw, and it is safe to predict that it will last the rest of the season and well into the summer. Not since these authors wrote "The Man From Home" have they done such excellent work.

The story concerns a rich and romantic widower named *George Washington Silver* and a charming twentieth century *Desdemona* with a subconscious yearning for a white *Othello*. *Edith Valentine* is the modern *Desdemona* and she thinks she is in love with the widower's fatuous and snobbish son, *George Silver*. The elder *Silver*,

thinking the girl is merely after his son's money, undertakes to win her by a mock courtship in order to convince his son that she is merely a social adventuress. In a tempestuous love scene, this *Othello*, who has lived a colorful life on the sea and in port, captures the girl's heart and is himself captured.

That is the simple plot, but it is the way it is worked out that is so thoroughly delightful. Not since "Miss Nelly of N'Orleans," have I witnessed a more deftly handled situation than in the scene where *Silver* persuades the lovely *Edith* to forgo her masquerade party and dine with him alone. She agrees, and they have wine together and he sings her an old sea chantey about Rosa McFall. They are having a wonderful time when the outside world, in the person of *Captain Hercules Penny* knocks at their door. It is like the knocking at the door in "Macbeth" and brings them to earth with a bang.

The acting of Norman Trevor as the captivating *Silver* was thoroughly suited to the delicate mood of the slight play. He was irresistible, and it is small wonder that lovely *Edith* succumbed at the first attack. *Edith*, by the way, was played by Ann Andrews, and her piquant charm and roguish naiveté add much to the general enjoyment of the audience. Cecil Yapp made the part of *Captain Hercules Penny*, a meddlesome old sea captain who came nearly setting two hearts adrift, stand out like a cameo. This is a genuine Dickens character, and Mr. Yapp made the most of it. It is the best acting of his versatile career. The rest of the cast was adequate.

Grace George, who had a repertory season at the Playhouse several years ago, opened her new season with a thistledown comedy by Mark Reed, a student of Professor Baker's playwriting course at Harvard, entitled

"She Would and She Did." Miss George has done nothing better since "Divorcons." It is her delightful acting, rather than the comedy itself, that holds the interest. Mr. Reed has achieved the miracle of writing a play minus a plot, and with no drama or suspense. It concerns the efforts of *Frances Nesmith* to get reinstated in her country club, after having been suspended for cutting up a golf green in a fit of anger. In order to be reinstated, she cuts up didos and gets every one mixed up like a Bolshevik mass meeting. That is positively all there is to the play; but not to see Miss George cut up is to miss the finest comedy work of the young season.

"Civilian Clothes" by Thompson Buchanan is another one of those returned-soldier plays that are now so epidemic in our theaters. It is an amusing play that starts out as a comedy with a real idea and dribbles out into cheap farce. It is an impossible yarn about a Red Cross recruit who falls in love with a treat-'em-rough captain over there and marries him. Then she comes back over here, and later on her husband appears on the scene in civilian clothes, and very loud clothes they are! There is a genuine chance here for a fine bit of work, but Mr. Buchanan was keeping his eye too closely on the box office to see it. He switches the mood to horseplay farce by having the soldier become a butler in his wife's house. Of course, he wins back her dwindling love. Thurston Hall as the hero, Isabel Irving, William Holden, Marion Vantine, and the other members of the case acquitted themselves well. But it is deplorable that Mr. Buchanan, who wrote "A Woman's Way" for Grace George, one of the best comedies written by an American author, should have stooped to such cheap methods of popularity.

"Nightie Night" is not nearly so naughty as its title. This amusing

farce by Martha M. Stanley and Adelaide Matthews marks the managerial debut of Adolph Klauber, at one time dramatic critic of the *New York Times*. It will be with us for a long, long time. It is one of those mix-up farces on the order of "Fair and Warmer," but from start to finish it keeps up a barrage of laughter, and the last act straightens out all the complications and sends the audience home, chuckling reminiscently.

"A Regular Fellow," which introduces Charles Emerson Cook, erstwhile press representative, as a Broadway manager, has not the staying qualities of "Nightie Night." It is an old-fashioned comedy by Mark Swann that is feebly amusing in spots, but the spots are too far apart to help much. I am afraid "A Regular Fellow" will not remain long enough on Broadway to get acquainted with many theatergoers.

Tony Sarg's Marionettes appeared at the Provincetown Players Theater in "Jack and the Beanstalk," "A Victorian Romance," "Polly and Her Pals," and "The Great Indian Snake Charmers." As usual, these manikins made a big hit with the audiences. Those who have not seen this unique sort of entertainment will do well to take advantage of the next opportunity to make the acquaintance of Mr. Sarg's pictorial family.

John and Lionel Barrymore in Sem Benelli's powerful drama, "The Jest," are back on Broadway again, and are repeating their tremendous success of last season. The members of the original cast have been kept intact by Arthur Hopkins.

"Scandal," a pseudo-society drama by Cosmo Hamilton reminds one of a dramatization of *Town Topics*. Mr. Hamilton has tried with all the desperation of Robert W. Chambers, to shock his audiences by frank sex sensation—the sort of thing that was done in "Bought and Paid For." The

heroine, *Beatrix Vanderdyke*, like the familiar salamander heroines of fiction, is fond of playing with fire. She flirts with *Pelham Franklin*, a born devil with women, and gets so close to the fire that she narrowly escapes cremation.

"Scandal" is the sort of play that would provoke from out-of-town critics such ejaculations as "daring," "shocking," "revolutionary" and such, yet it leaves one rather bored and not a whit shocked. Even the sight of a genial gentleman tearing the clothing from the daring heroine in a bedchamber, failed to evoke much emotion. I knew that he would turn out to be a real gentleman before any damage was done to said heroine, and he did!

The only redeeming features of this rather nauseating attempt to shock were the excellent acting of Charles Cherry as *Pelham Franklin*, and the performance of Francine Larrimore as the devilishly daring and hectic heroine, *Beatrix Vanderdyke*.

What a joy it is to turn from "Scandal" to the frolicsome fun and tuneful twitterings of "The Mikado." This never-say-die comic opera was revived again for a week by the Gallo English Opera Company, with Hana

Shimozumi, a bewitching little Japanese prima donna playing the part of *Yum Yum*. This welcome newcomer is like a humming bird poised on a flower, a humming bird that can sing as well as hum. Her voice is sweet and melodious, and she has a stage personality that is fetching.

Jefferson de Angelis played *Ko Ko* as only he can play it. It is a familiar part to him after all these years, but he was never funnier than when he sang about those who never will be missed, mentioning the prohibitionist, particularly. William Danforth's performance of the *Mikado* is already stage history. His make-up and acting are masterly. I cannot believe that there ever was a better *Mikado*. Louis Cassavant was a most amusing *Poo Bah*, and Warren Proctor's fine voice was at its best in the rôle of *Nanki Poo*.

Speaking of the actors' strike, the cleverest thing that was said by any one during the hostilities, came from the lips of Francis Wilson, president of the Actors' Equity Association, when he referred to members of the Fidelity League as the "Fidoes." Every time a manager whistles now, you can tell whether an actor belongs to the Equity Association or the Fidelity League.



THE FINAL GIFT

I GAVE you first my deeds of hardihood;
Your name above your peers I strove to raise,
And, bleeding victor, found the guerdon good
When from your lips I won a word of praise.
I gave you then my treasure, freely poured,
A Danaë flood your favor to beguile;
When at your feet lay all the glittering hoard,
You gave me what I yearned for in a smile.
I gave to you my body—feet and hands
And lackeying eyes were mine for only this;
To read your thoughts and do your least commands;
You paid, you overpaid me with a kiss.
I gave you last my dreams; in mad affright,
You rent the web and spurned me from your sight.

CHARLES WHARTON STORK.

Talks With Ainslee's Readers

NEXT month appears our annual Holiday Number. As in the past, it will contain none but unusual stories, many of them with the Christmas flavor that never grows stale and that at this time of the year seems absolutely essential in a magazine of entertainment. We call your special attention to two short stories, the excellence and originality of which cannot fail to please you: "Who Was Sylvia?" by Arthur Crabb; and "Love and the Goose Carver," by Robert W. Sneddon. Weeks and weeks ago, we picked both of these popular Ainslee's authors as men who ought to be able to write Christmas tales, though they had not before used the theme. We put it up to them to give you something different, and they have succeeded. "Who Was Sylvia?" contains a mystery, the charm of which is hinted at in the title. "Love and the Goose Carver" is a piece of whimsy about a girl and two Irishmen, one young and one old.

THE complete novelette for January will be "The Woman Without a Shadow," by Lillian Bennet-Thompson and George Hubbard. The heroine, Eve, had made up her mind to marry for money and social position. Her suitor has bought the Western ranch where she had been born and gives a house party there, at which she is the principal guest. He has a younger rival and knows it, but deliberately risks the test of bringing Eve into contact with the environment of her childhood. The resulting complication is worked out in a curious and fascinating way. An Indian legend plays a large part in the plot. In fact, the novelette is that rare

delight in fiction—a sophisticated love story with an American Indian angle.

LOUISE RICE, author of the series of gypsy tales, "Romany Hearts," now appearing in Ainslee's, has crowded her life with interesting happenings. We asked her to tell you about herself, and instead of writing several pages of biography, as she might easily have done, she sent the following modest letter: "I learned to read before I learned to talk. I could write, in girlhood, what life had shown me and meant to me, but I was famous for having not even the commonplaces of conversation. I wrote stories long before I could spell. When stern reality pointed a commanding finger at me, I became a reporter, then a re-writer, a publicity writer, an advertisement writer, and a music teacher. In and between all those, I was a professional graphologist. Three guesses as to what that is! There was a restaurant that I ran for a while, and a big gymnasium, where I taught women, for several years, how to be natural human beings, and not manikins. I liked that. Then I farmed for a little, and ran the household departments of some magazines, and wrote fashion articles, but always, always I was trying to write the stories that kept murmuring in my heart. I'm glad that fate kept me so long knocking at her door. While I stood there, I saw the world go by. Perhaps, some day, I shall be able to write what I saw."

OTHER features for January will include "Making Fine Birds," by Grace Hodgson Flandrau; "The White

Peacock," by Nancy Boyd; and "The Gladiator," by H. C. Bailey. All of these are 'way out of the beaten track. "Making Fine Birds" is less a story than the most entertaining account you ever read of what shopping on Fifth Avenue really means. "The White

Peacock" is an exquisite bit of writing by the author of "The Dark Horse" in the September Ainslee's. "The Gladiator" is a yarn of love and adventure in ancient Rome, with Julius Cæsar as one of the characters. Next month's "Super-woman" will be Theodora.



NOCTURNE—REMEETING

THE years have touched us harshly, taken our youth
And given it to the winds for laughter, drained
The golden chalice of our dreams, and stained
The western heavens crimson. Blind with truth,
We grope together on the heights we've gained,
Staggered by what the world has made us pay
In dark to-morrows for one yesterday
Of piercing light. Yet something has remained:

The suffering heart that sings! The aching soul
That surges rhythmically! The lyric lips
That pain cannot make mute! What doom shall strike
Such madness from us, who have found the goal?
Lo, where in final pomp the fierce sun dips!
Now we shall learn what love's great night is like.

H. THOMPSON RICH.

Statement of the Ownership, Management, etc., required by the Act of Congress of August 24, 1912, of AINSLEE'S, published monthly, at New York, N. Y., for October 1, 1919:

State of New York, County of New York, (ss.)

Before me, a Notary Public, in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared George C. Smith, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is Treasurer of Street & Smith Corporation, publishers of AINSLEE'S, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 443, Postal Laws and Regulations, to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: *Publishers*, Street & Smith Corporation, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; *editor*, W. Adolphe Roberts, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; *managing editors*, Street & Smith Corporation, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; *business managers*, Street & Smith Corporation, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

2. That the owners are: Ainslee's Magazine Company, Seventh Avenue and Fifteenth Street, New York, N. Y., a corporation, composed of Ormond G. Smith, 89 Seventh Avenue, New York,

N. Y.; George C. Smith, 89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.; Cora A. Gould, 89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: Clarence C. Vernam, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

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GEORGE C. SMITH, Treasurer,

of Street & Smith Corporation, publishers.
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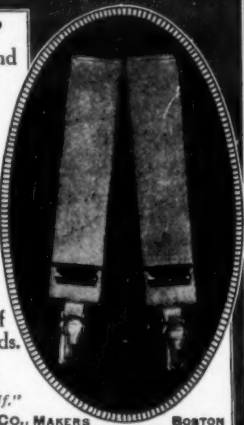
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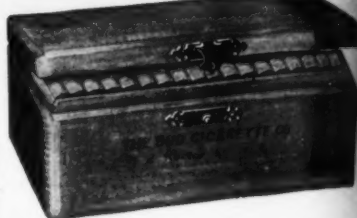
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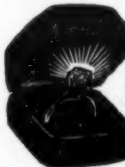
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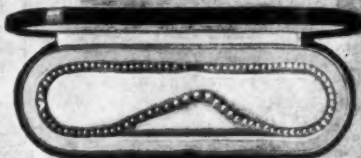
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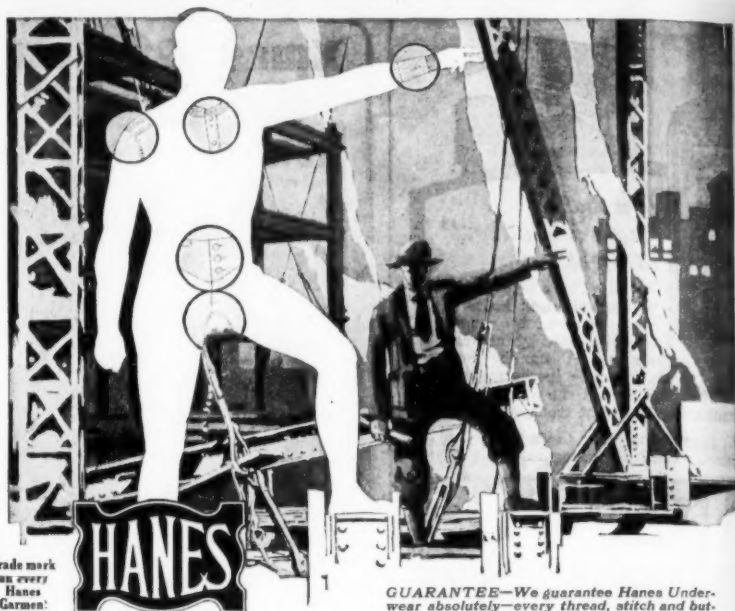
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Hanes Union Suits have never been near-equaled at the price. They have all the desirable features of Hanes Shirts and Drawers *with a closed crotch that stays closed!*

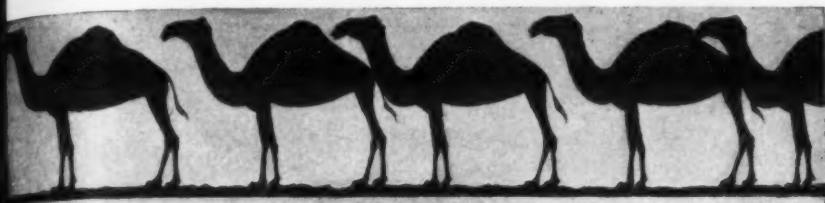
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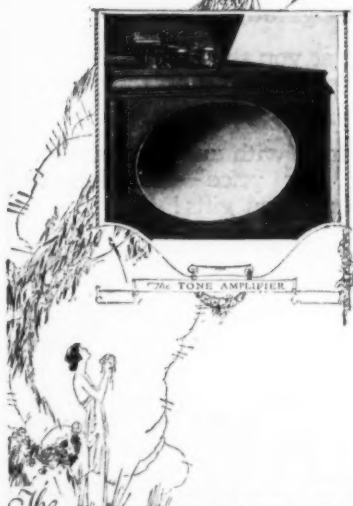
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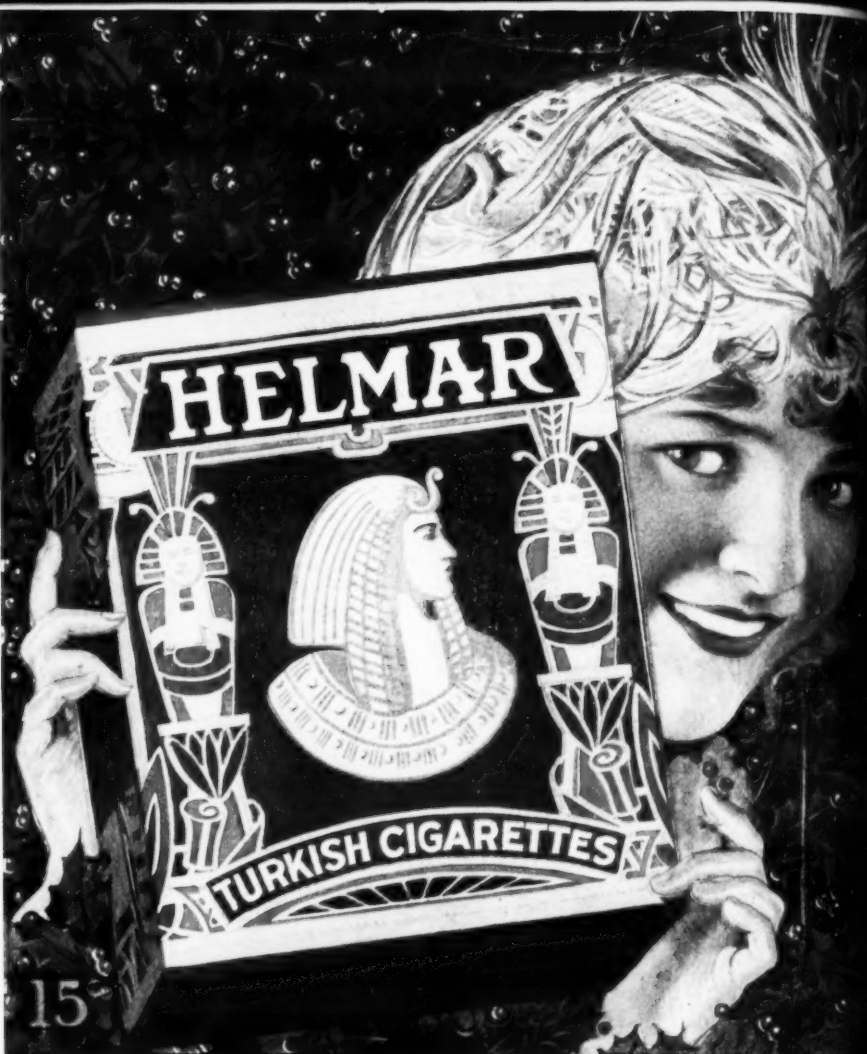
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